master guide to JANE AUSTEN'S EMMA

BY PROF. BASHIR HUSSAIN, M.A

LAHORE

KITAB MAHAL

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MASTER GUIDE
TO
JANE AUSTEN'S
EMMA

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The period between the publication of Humphry Clinker in 1771 and that of Waverly in 1814 was marked by the production of fiction, which, in form, though not always in content, was based on the work of the four great novelists : Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. Till about the year 1790, the novel of letters, popularised by Richardson, and that of direct narration were equally in vogue, but after that date the novel of letters slowly declined. There were many imitators of Fielding who divided the novels into books containing introductory chapters and writing ponderous epics in the manner of Fielding. The most important of the imitations of Fielding's novels is *Henry* by Richard Cumberland. Here *Tom Jone* has been adjusted to the manners of the end of the century and in the initial chapters he discovers the state of learning in England in his day, comparing it with the past and remarking how in his youth he used to frequent the home of 'facetious' master. The sentiment and gesture of Sterne were diffused everywhere and the correspondence of lovers provided sentimental repasts, while letters of business were punctuated with dashes and stars. *The Man of Feeling* by Henry Mackenzie written in a style alternating between that of Sterne and a winning plaintiveness is the most sentimental of all English novels.

In spite of all this imitative work, the age of Jane Austen, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, was also

an age of transition. It was, in fact, the seed-time of the nineteenth century novel. The novel of sentiment expanded and gathered to itself politics and ethics and passed into the novel of purpose which served as a medium for promulgating theories of government, conduct and education. The novel of manners, mostly in the hands of women novelists, was refined into the novel of social satire as exemplified by *Pride and Prejudice.* As a sort of reaction against the novel of manners, was developed the new kind of romance which had its beginning with Smollett. This culminated in the romantic tales of Scott and Cooper.

Ever since the reformation, the theories of moralists and philosophers had found their way into popular fiction. Utopia, Euphues, and Richardson's novels, all had their didactic purpose. In the year before the outbreak of the French Revolution, the speculations of Hooker, Hobbes, and Locke were given to the masses by men and women who wanted to persuade and arouse people. The first of the English writers of this class was Henry Brooke. His work, *Fool of Quality* describes in detail the education of a Christian gentleman. Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton* is another interesting variation of the pedagogic novel. It contains an elaborate scheme for parents to follow in the education of their children and is an interesting book for the children themselves. The general criticism of boarding-schools among educationists found expression in such novels as Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story.* Revolutionary ideas were expressed through the novels of Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin, Elizabeth Inchbald and Amelia Opie. The most radical opinions of current philosophy were most boldly expressed in Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives.* While Holcroft gives expression to all revolutionary ideals in his novels, the other novelists of his group are mainly concerned with marriage and the relation of the sexes. Of the works of these revolutionists only *Calab Williams* by Godwin has survived. The others are of mere historical interest. The revolutionists took the sentimental novel, the story of adventure and the Gothic romance and incorporated into them their social treatise. Thus they created the didactic novel or the novel of purpose.

Fanny Burney's *Evelina* is a novel of manners which marks the move from the old manners portrayed in *Tom Jones* to the more refined contemporary manners. While the smart people portrayed in *Evelina* are rather shadowy, those in her next novel *Cecilia* are more clearly moulded into types. This novel is the best caricature of English society before the Revolution. The contemporary life is presented to us as seen through the eyes of a woman. Young ladies are the centres of interest and the question which is most important concerning the character of a man is whether he promises to do well as a husband.

Miss Burney was the source of inspiration and model for imitation to many other women novelists. Among them were Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. Miss Edgeworth gave the novel of manners its vogue in *Belinda* and *Fashionable Tales*, including, *Ennui, The Dun, The Absentee etc.* Harum-scarum manners is the theme of *The Absentee.* It portrays "women who despise their dissipated and gambling husbands and flirt with their cousins or chance acquaintances, fight duels and go about in masques or disguised as men". *The Absentee* contains two brilliant groups of contemporary portraits. First there are the London scenes in which Lady Clonbrony tries to get a foothold in society by the splendour of her 'gala' and the present of dried Irish salmon to Lady St. James and by struggling to get rid of her Irish accent. Contrasted with these are the moving scenes on the abandoned Irish estate where the tenants are living in rags and mud, racked by the heartless agent. In this contrast of manners, Miss Edgeworth stands historically between Smollett and Henry Jemes.

In the Gothic romance, we have a form of the novel where the epistolary and dramatic analogies employed by Richardson and Fielding are displaced by the epic narrative, and the analysis and ridicule of contemporary manners is displaced by a return to magic, mystery and chivalry. These changes were initiated by Smollett. He carried realism to that point where by its enormities, it became romance and he revived the interest in superstitions. The

trick of first exciting fear and then allowing it to tumble flat was first employed by Smollett. It was habitually employed by writers of Gothic romance who came after him during the next half century.

Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* gave a new impulse to romance. The events of the romance are assigned to Italy of the twelfth or thirteenth century, though in reality, they have no definite historical background, being all build up in imagination. While Smollett gave romance its method of dealing with superstition, Walpole gave it its machinery.

Miss Clara Reeve tried to correct the extravagances of the *Castle of Otranto* in her *Old English Baron.* The new romance was of three varieties shading into one another; the historical, the Gothic and the Oriental. Mrs. Anna Radcliffe's novels, by the redundancy of her style, her passion for music and wild scenery, and her ability to awaken wonder and awe, soon came to be regarded as the most complete expression of romanticism before Scott. Her five romances, *The Castles of Athlin and Dumbayne, A Sicilian Romance, The Romance of the Forest, The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian* all have their typical Gothic scenery and the beautiful heroine looked up in some haunted wing of a ruined castle. She wrote for the interest of the story and her characters are all types, not individuals. Her descriptions of places also are rather general, and can be applied to types of places and not particular localities. The Gothic romance popularised by Mrs. Radcliffe was taken up by a long number of writers, chief among whom was Matthew Gregory Lewis who wrote *The M nk.* The Gothic romancers insisted that outside the real world is a world of "fine fabling," and in the attention to plot lost sight of their characters which were mere types or abstractions. They made possible a *Jane Eyre* in which high romance lends its aid to the sternest realism. Mrs. Radcliffe's passion for deep woods, mountains, storms and sea added a new interest to fiction. Her influence, either directly or through Scott, was exerted on every variety

of the nineteenth century novel whether romantic, psychological or naturalistic. She made the landscape a convention in fiction.

The new historical romance came into being with the publication of Miss Sophia Lee's *Recess* which tells a tale of the time of Queen Elizabeth, portraying most of the court worthies. After this there is a steady flow of historical romances down to Scott. Many of them portray the contentions between the houses of York and Lancaster while some spread out over the whole period of English history. The romances of Jane Porter were a great improvement over any imaginative treatment of history which had yet appeared. The unfinished work of Joseph Strutt, in "Queen-hoo Hall" gives us the best example of historical fiction which attempts an exact reproduction of the past. It is the kind of work Scott has most successfully carried out in his historical novels.

In Jane Austen we have the critic of romance and of contemporary manners. Her novels mark a reaction from the literature of crime, insanity and the nightmare of romance. Romanticism which had drunk deep of new emotions received sharp castigation from the good sense of the author of *Northanger Abbey*. It is primarily a comic version of the Gothic romance and can be classed with the burlesques, *Don Quixote* and *Joseph Andrews*. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austen ridicules the gentlementalists, while in all the novels the follies and defects in contemporary manners are held up to ridicule. In both *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*, the novelist gave her view of what a novel should not be. Epic digressions, commonplace moralizings, hysterical sentiments, the lovely weather of romance, are all done away with. In these very novels and in those others written by her, she takes the same critical attitude towards the manners of her times.

Chapter II

THE NEW LINEAGE OF WOMEN NOVELISTS

JANE AUSTEN'S PLACE AMONG THEM—THE PERFECTION OF THE NOVEL OF MANNERS—HOW SHE EXEMPLIFIES THE FEMININE POINT OF VIEW

When Jane Austen entered the literary scene, there was already a feminist tradition established in English fiction by the works of writers like Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, Miss Fanny Burney, Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Inchbald, Maria Edgeworth, and others. Just as genius of Shakespeare consists partly in the way in which he transcended the limitations of his age and its conventions and in turning what appears to be artificialities into a means of achieving the particular effects at which he was aiming, Jane Austen's lies in turning the inferior work by her predecessors to positive and constructive uses. However much she may satirise Charlotte Smith or Anne Radcliff, the practitioners of the Gothic mode in English fiction, she is indebted to them in various ways besides finding in their work something to parody. Similarly her indebtedness to Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth and the lesser women novelists can be traced in a hundred little things, though in the practice of her art, Jane Austen rises far superior to all of them, having attained to a place among the best English novelists.

One of the women novelists who influenced Jane Austen was Charlotte Lennox, the author of *The Female Quixote* published in 1752. Mrs. Lennox's satire on the voluminous 17th century French romances was one of the important influences which inspired the ridicule of sentiment, horror

and terror in her novel *Northanger Abbey.* Mrs. Lennox and Jane Austen ridicule, in their respective works, the false taste and behaviour caused by reading romances and melodramatic literature. The theme of education, the mistakes caused by self-deception encouraged by wrong standards and ideals, the attempt to live in accordance with principles that cannot be applied to the world of ordinary, normal personal relationship, lies behind much of Jane Austen's criticism of feminine triviality. The romantic attitude, burlesqued in *The Female Quixote* involves an exaggerated vindication of the rights of woman and a rejection of all restraint.

Jane Austen showed her usual critical shrewdness in using the conventions of the novel as written by Fanny Burney, as a framework for her own fiction. Miss Burney, by writing *Evelina, Cecilia* and *Camilla,* despite their absurdities and limitations, established a tradition for other women novelists to follow. While Fanny Burney writes in the stilted Johnsonian style, Jane Austen, avoiding the mannerisms of Johnson, writes a style that is deeply influenced by him, and at the same time, is her own. The surely, vulgar and disagreeable Captain Mirvan in *Evelina* resembles the sailor father of Fanny Price, who embarrasses the heroine while staying in his sordid house at Portsmouth. Both Fanny Burney and Jane Austen were influenced by Fielding as well as Dr. Johnson. The treatment of vulgar characters in Fanny Burney's novels often gave useful hints to Miss Austen. Madame Duval in *Evelina* is the model for Mrs. Jannings in *Sense and Sensibility,* and Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice,* contrasts with the delicacy of the heroine just as Madam Duval contrasts with Evelina. Again the false exaggeration of Mrs. Elton in making the remark "I am doatingly fond of music passionately fond" recalls Madam Duval's observation that music is her passion. Occasionally we find Jane Austen parodying the solemn, pompous reflections of Fanny Burney, as in the whispered comments of Mary Bennet to Elizabeth, on the scandalous behaviour of Lydia.

Jane Austen's conception of her hero is not very different from that of Fanny Burney though her heroines

are much less conventional. Miss Burney is too close to some of her characters and fascinated by others as Richardson is with his creations. She is involved in the vulgarity of the Braughtons in *Evelina*, in a way that Jane Austen never is with her vulgar characters. Air, address, 'countenance,' person, manners and conversation impress us favourably in Fanny Burney's heroes and in those of Jane Austen. In the first description of Darcy Jane Austen seems to deflate the glamorous heroic ideal but it is restored later in the novel and reappears in the portrait of Mr. Knightley in *Emma*. Critics have pointed out many resemblances between *Evelina* and *Pride and Prejudice* and have gone to the extent of saying that "the original conception of *First Impressions* was to rewrite *Cecilia* in realistic terms." Subjects of conversation in Fanny Burney's novels are also seen to have given Miss Austen valuable hints. For example, Mr. Meadows' opinions on dancing, in *Cecilia* may be compared with those of Darcy, made in reply to Sir William Lucas's observation that it is one of the refinements of published society. Mr. Knightley and Henry Tilney also express themselves without enthusiasm, on this subject. Again, the supercilious Miss Leeson and the voluble Miss Larolles will remind a reader of Jane Austen's characters, of Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates in *Emma*. At one point in *Camilla* there is a scene where the hero Edgar Mandlebert impulsively snatches the heroine's hand and carries it to his lips and then lets it go. This is similar to the scene where Mr. Knightley does almost the same thing with *Emma*. The coincidence could not be accidental. The quality of Jane Austen's writing makes the scene between Emma and Mr. Knightley much more vivid than the one between Edgar Mandlebert and his lady.

One of the most popular of the women novelists who influenced Jane Austen was Charlotte Smith. Miss Lasceller has contrasted Charlotte Smith's Emmaline with Jane Austen's Catherine Morland. She influenced Jane Austen in the use of picturesque and natural scenes as a background to the novels. She also provides an occasional phrase or cliche or vulgarism for the use of the more famous novelist. However, as Charlotte Smith's main contribution to fiction was

to the Gothic romance, she was only of negative use to Jane Austen in providing burlesque material for *Northanger Abbey*.

In *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen occasionally appears to have absorbed Shakespeare through the medium of Anne Radcliffe. Her *Mysteries of Udolpho* and novels of that class in general, have been burlesqued in *Northanger Abbey*. The relationship between Miss Austen and her predecessors must have been more easily apparent to her first readers than it is to us. They would easily find out that *Lovers' Vows*, referred to Mrs. Inchbald's translation of a play by Kotzebue. They would also see in Mr. Knightley's reference to Harriet's fortunes as 'a simple story,' the title of Mrs. Inchbald's novel, *A Simple Story*.

Another novelist who influenced Jane Austen was Maria Edgeworth. Her novel, *Belinda* is mentioned, together with Fanny Burney's *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, in *Northanger Abbey* where Jane Austen is defending the prestige of the novel as a literary form. She speaks of each of these novels as a "work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language." Miss Austen's own novels may be considered didactic stories in the sense in which Maria Edgeworth uses the term. As an artist Jane Austen, was faced with the problem of reconciling the moral intention which lay behind her fiction, with her natural instinct for comedy and the taste of the public for which she wrote. She ironically expresses her admiration for Miss Edgeworth by saying in a letter to her sister Cassandra, "I have made up my mind to like no novels really, but Miss Edgeworth's, yours and my own." In Miss Edgeworth's novel, *Patronage*, as in Mrs. Inchbald's *A Simple Story*, one feels very close to the world of Jane Austen's novels. As in Jane Austen's novels, so also we find in Miss Edgeworth's works a humour ranging from farce to subtle suggestion and it came without apparent premeditation.

Jane Austen, like her predecessor, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth and other women novelists of the period,

exemplifies the feminine point of view in fiction. Before the advent of Miss Burney, the novel of manners had been cultivated almost exclusively by men. The absurdities of the contemporary society had been viewed from the point of view of the man of the world, the preacher, the recluse and the rogue. Among the novelists, Richardson alone had gained the reputation of interpreting the feminine mind with tolerable success. With the advent of the women novelists, the outlook is entirely reversed. For the first time the world is presented in fiction as it appears to a woman. Man falls from the pedestal he has erected for himself and is no longer the central figure in the story, round which the other characters revolve. On the other hand, the heroines of the novels become the centres around which the men gyrate. The most important aspect of a man's character is whether he promises to do well as a husband. Feminine dress becomes a matter of absorbing interest and the flutterings of a young woman's heart are described in very truthful and painstaking manner. While the novel in the past had not only been written by men but were also written for men, the novels of Francis Barney and her her followers were written primarily for the women. Hence they contained descriptions of things and sensations which were not only unimportant but also often unknown to the men. Francis Barney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen all created for the novel a wholesome moral atmosphere. Instruction, however, was not generally put uppermost in the novels, exemplifying the feminine point of view. In the words of W. L. Cross that "they were not written to overturn the English Constitution or to bring about a general reformation of society, but to mark the manners of the time," is clear. But there is ample evidence in the novels of Jane Austen to show that they do not merely mark the manners of the time. They pass from the level of social history to the level of broad allegories in which the virtues and defects of man are set forth and commented upon in narrative form and they also exemplify the ironic point of view in which incidents, characters and situations imply something beyond that they embody and are considered as symbolic rather than allegorical. Hence their value and importance for posterity.

Chapter III

JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE AND THE IDEAS CENTRAL TO HER WRITINGS

THE EXCELLENCE OF HER WORK—ITS LIMITATIONS—HER PLACE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Jane Austen, born on the sixteenth of December 1775 at Steventon rectory as the daughter of a country parson, had spent the years of her childhood and youth in this obscure place which still has about it an air of privacy and retirement. Her life at the rectory was indeed a sequestered one, "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife." But working with the extremely limited materials offered by the quiet life around her she was able to rise to the position of the universally acclaimed mistress of the novel of manners. She was able to attain this distinction by being content to do what she could really do. She never attempted, like some other women novelists, to meddle with passions, theories and styles of writing which were too much for her. Oliver Elton speaks about the missing harmony of gifts she has been able to attain by making narrative and portraiture, talk and style, to reach perfection and to interpenetrate in the pure service of art.

To understand her work better, we should learn something of the world in which her comparatively short life was passed and the conditions under which her novels were produced. Though she was bred in the country and had a great love of natural scenery, her primary interest was in her own fellowbeings and among these, the members of her own family stood foremost. Though she had many and frequent contacts with the outside world, she was never separated from her family for any considerable period of time. Hers was a large family, the rector of Steventon being blessed with many sons and two daughters,

and a very hospitable one. The result was that she learned early in life to live unperturbed in a throng and thus to have her own secret life of the imagination which the novelist must pass in the company of his imaginary characters if he is to succeed in persuading his readers that they are real. Because Jane Austen's family mattered so much to her, we can understand her and her novels better by learning about the two generations (the parents and children) at the Steventon household and the third generation of nephews and nieces that knew her after she had left Steventon. George Austen, the father of Jane, was gentle and affectionate towards his family and devoted himself ardently to the care of his parish, his farm and the pupils whom he prepared for Oxford. The reputation for scholarship and literary taste which is based on his preparing two of his own sons for Oxford, is confirmed by his quick and early perception of his daughter's gifts. Mrs. Austen was a country woman with a keen taste for gardening and plenty of vitality which helped to carry her through long stretches of illness. She had a power of terse, forcible expression closely allied to wit. She keenly enjoyed broad comedy such as is provided by her daughter's inimitable creations, *Lady Catherine*, and *Mr. Collins*.

Among the children, James, who, after his first curacy at Oxford, succeeded his father at Steventon, was perhaps closest to his sisters, constantly playing an unobtrusive part in their lives. He was characterised by a taste for literature, which bound him all the more closely to his sister, Jane. Edward, the second son, was adopted as a child and brought up by his distant cousins, Thomas and Catherine Knight, of Godmersham in Kent. Next to Edward came Henry, the brother who was closest to Jane in sympathy and understanding. Cassandra, the sister was the most important of all the family in Jane's life. Within the family they led a life to themselves, enjoying a sort of "double singleness." Cassandra had a reputation for sterling sense and Jane cared very much for what she thought of her work. Apart from the little that we learn about her from the letters and comments of the other members of the

family, we have hardly any means of knowing what kind of a person she was. Next to Cassandra came Francis, marked by the same good sense, and last of all was Charles, who enjoyed a reputation for his power of engaging affection.

The family described above was the focus of Jane Austen's life and she was always a particular favourite with them. They were always ready with their appreciation and encouragement of her work. All her works were read aloud at home, at first to Cassandra, and later, to the whole family. Her father, seeing the promise in her first work, *First Impressions*, had wanted to publish it at his expense and after his time, her brother Henry had shown the same active enthusiasm in Jane's works, thus encouraging her to further ventures. The members of the family were bound together by the closest ties of family affection and young Jane was fortunate in having such a family to give her every encouragement in her work.

In 1782, after a visit to a relative of their mother, Jane and Cassandra were sent to a school in Reading, where, for a year or two, they scrambled themselves into a little education. Having returned home by 1784, they continued to scramble into more education, depending on father or brothers to encourage and direct their reading and developing taste in music and drawing by their own efforts. The life at the Steventon rectory enabled Jane and Cassandra to have more leisurely sociable reading and talk than Fanny and Susan Price could afford at Portsmouth. Though the Austen sisters got only less teaching than the Miss Bennets, they had more stimulus and encouragement. Jane's natural gifts were also much encouraged by a cultured neighbour, Mrs. Lefroy of Ashe, and by a cousin who occasionally visited Steventon. She also found very great pleasure in the company of Elizabeth, the widowed cousin who soon married her brother, Henry Austen.

Jane must have been very young when she was introduced to the writings of Johnson, Cowper and Goldsmith whom she admired greatly. She was also beginning to like Crabbe and read novels of all kinds. Her enjoyment of the absurdities in current fiction developed early and

lasted to the very end of her life. Having a room all to herself and Cassandra, Jane started scribbling down imitations and burlesques of many existing novels. During the first sixteen years of her life, she seems to have been hesitating between burlesque and very immature story-telling. Out of Jane Austen's juvenilia we have now two note-books full of plays, tales and burlesques, entitled *Volume the First* and *Love and Friendship.* The main purpose of these writings was to satirise the false conventions which governed mood and expression in the fiction of the day.

During Jane's last few years at Steventon, her social horizon was steadily widening. She was frequently visited by her parents' friends and relations as well as her own. Among them were the Leigh Perrots and Coopers, the Lloyds and the Biggs and Jane made frequent visits to them, sometimes staying with relatives in Bath or in Gloucestershire. She also stayed with Edward, first at his home in Ravling and later at Godmersham. These expeditions as well as the local dances and balls in the big houses introduced Jane Austen to a variety of acquaintances. Though the range of her acquaintance was very limited, she learned early to discriminate exquisitely between individuals of the same set and social class.

Jane was leading this life of "miscellaneous, unsettled happiness" which is reflected in her letters of this period when James's wife died and his two year-old child was committed to the care of her aunts at the rectory. Jane who was busy with the first draft of a novel, nevertheless, found time to amuse the child by writing down and inventing stories for her. In February 1797, Thomas Powle who was engaged to Cassandra died suddenly and Jane was much moved by her sister's loss. Cassandra's sad experience, imperfectly transmuted, is echoed in Elinor Dashwood's explicit protest that fortitude has nothing to do with insensibility. The novel in its original form "Elinor and Marianne" had been epistolatory. It was later recast into direct narrative and entitled *Sense and Sensibility.* Another Richardsonian novel, written at this time was

Lady Susan, but it was never published and Jane Austen never used the epistolatory device again.

Cassandra's diary indicates that *First Impressions*, the earlier form of *Pride and Prejudice* was begun in October 1796 and finished in August 1797. After being read aloud, first to Cassandra and later to the rest of the family, it was offered to a London publisher Cadell, who declined to be concerned with its publication. Though it was temporarily laid aside, Jane and her family thought well of it. This accounts for its subsequent recasting into *Pride and Prejudice*.

First Impressions taught Jane that her forte was direct narrative and in November 1797, she started recasting *Elinor and Marianne* into *Sense and Sensibility*. In 1797 and 1798 she was working on the first version of the novel which was later published as *Northanger Abbey*. The last two and a half years at Steventon did not see any literary output as it was much interrupted by visits and the prospect of change.

In 1801, the parents and daughters set out on a series of rambles, visiting Sidmouth first and then proceeding to Dawlish, Ramsgate and Lyme Regis. During these travels, Jane had met in Devonshire a gentleman who loved her and whose love she returned. Unfortunately he died soon afterwards. The period 1803-1809 was one of dejection and silence owing to various reasons. *Northanger Abbey*, under its first title *Susan* was revised and offered for publication but it never got beyond the advertisement that it was going through the press. Despite her disappointment, Jane Austen embarked on a new venture, *The Wastons* which, however was left unfinished ; Mrs. Lefroy's death in December 1804 and her father's a month latter, left Jane badly shaken. In spite of an irritability of temper and dejection of spirits which followed, Jane Austen's critical faculty still continued to be active. Her state of mind at this period is admirably described in the following passage : "A rational woman, exceptional in intellect, unique in wit, found herself in circumstances which were always meagre and at times irrational ; and endowed with fastidiousness

on the one hand and enjoyment on the other, she employed her experience creatively in the service of comedy. The novels are a vent."

There was much change and need for adaptation in Jane's life after her father's death. Mrs. Austen's household now was that of a widow living with her spinster daughters and a friend who was also a widow. She was glad to leave Bath and settle down at Southampton with Frank Austen's family for three years. They were thus within reach of James at Steventon and it was during this period that young James Edward, Jane's future biographer, came to know his aunt intimately. When in October 1808 Edward's wife died, leaving him with eleven children, Cassandra and Jane had to take the care of these motherless nephews and nieces. Jane was delighted to see this new generation succeeding to all the pleasing pursuits of her own besides some which she and her sister had missed.

Her recovery of spirits resulted in renewed interest in her work. By July 1809, Mrs. Austen and her daughters had moved to a house at Chawton, on Edward's Hamphire estate, where they were within easy reach of the rest of the family. It was at Chawton that her nephews and nieces had the best chance of knowing their aunt Jane whose gentleness and good humour they all remembered. The mood of Jane Austen in these last eight years of her life was one where "the laughter of comedy is impersonal and of unrivalled politeness." In this mood she turned to the three manuscripts she had laid aside at Steventon. The first to be revised and published was *Elinor and Marianne*, under the title *Sense and Sensibility*. The immediate success of this encouraged her to publish the revised version of *First Impressions* as *Pride and Prejudice*. While revising *First Impressions*, Jane Austen had also become engaged on a new venture *Mansfield Park*. Soon-after the publication of *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* was reviewed in the Quarterly by no less a person than Scott who paid some glowing tributes to Jane Austen's powers as a novelist. About this time she bought back from the publisher, Crosby, the manuscript of *Susan*, which was

revised and named *Northanger Abbey*. While revising *Susan*, she had also been working on her last completed work *Persuasion*. This was finished in July 1816. Before her death on 18th July 1817, she had embarked on a hilarious comedy of invalidism, entitled *Sanditon*, but could not finish it.

Jane Austen occupies a unique position in English literature being neither a Romantic nor a Classic writer and being "too original and too great to be considered a precursor or an aphotheosis." Though she worked within a very limited field and dealt with materials extremely limited in themselves, she was able to develop themes of the broadest significance and to present very entertaining and very truthful versions of the human comedy. The great excellence of Jane Austen's work lies in the novelist's knowledge of the materials which she could handle with certainty of success and her taking care not to exceed the boundaries she had set for herself. She refers to herself as working on "the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory."

All the critics of Jane Austen's novels will agree that within her chosen field she is unrivalled. It is true that she is regarded by some as being too circumscribed and narrow. But though she always keeps close to the commonest incidents and to such characters as we meet with in the most ordinary walks of life, she is able to portray them with such liveliness, originality and verisimilitude that we derive out of her novels the same excitement and entertainment which the most romantic and exotic tales can produce. Sir Walter Scott was one of the first critic to admire Jane Austen's "talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life". He particularly praises her "exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment." Macaulay had fittingly compared Jane Austen to Shakespeare in the multitude and variety of characters she has created. Though all of them may be considered commonplace, in a sense, they are perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric characters.

Though all her readers see in Jane Austen a deliberate limitation and narrowness of range in her choice of subject-matter, her admirers find her scope quite adequate for the exposition of important themes. It is interesting to note that David Daiches, one of the most celebrated of living critics has seen in her a Marxist before Marx, exposing the economic basis of social behaviour with pleasing irony. Narrative and portraiture, talk and style had reached perfection and interpenetrated in the pure service of art in Jane Austen's works that she has been called by Oliver Elton as the mistress of the novel of manners. She is superior to all other women-writers and all but a few men-writers in English, as a creator and an artist. The smallness of her scale of operation cannot, by any means, lessen the perfection of her artistic achievement and as such she has been accepted as one of the classics in English literature.

Chapter IV

JANE AUSTEN'S LITERARY ACHIEVEMENTS

To-day Jane Austen is universally admitted to be an English classic, though she has to her credit only half a dozen novels, namely, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. Though her field was a very limited and narrow one she cultivated it with such perfect art as to win an immediate passport to eternity of literary fame.

Sense and Sensibility was her earliest published work since *First Impressions*, the earlier draft of *Pride and Prejudice*, though written earlier, was published much later. Though there are signs of immaturity and the crudities of a beginner, here and there, there is enough in this novel to show us that the author is an admirable artist, a perfect mistress of language and one of the finest creators of the comedy of manners. The earlier draft of the book was called *Elinor and Marianne* and it is in the life of these two sisters that Miss Austen wants us to become interested. The book is based on an Edgeworthian contrast and is marked by a governessing tone which we never again come across in her novels. Poetry, romance and unreasoned love are found fault with in the sensibility of Marianne Dashwood, while her sister Elinor who is dreary enough, is lauded as an ideal of cool, well-ordered sense. Both the sisters are tried, deceived and humiliated by various selfish, gross and fickle persons. All the orders of humanity representing the transitional changes from 'cheery vulgarity' to 'frigid meanness' are represented by people like Mrs. Jennings, the two Miss Steeles and the Palmers. There is in the book, much brilliant comedy and much interesting satire on human nature. The wit and humour are all the more enjoyable because we cannot help perceiving that they have come from a head that had thought about life and a heart that had felt its joy and sorrow.

Pride and Prejudice. Though it is not the most humane of Jane Austen's novels, it is the most humorously written and the most boldly constructed. In its original form it was called *First Impressions* and being turned down by the first publisher to whom the manuscript was offered, it was laid aside for about twelve years, to be published in 1818, after *Sense and Sensibility.* The book is not based, like *Sense and Sensibility* on the opposition of two embodied principles, one right and the other wrong. On the other hand, it reveals to us the clash of two opposing foibles which have to be mellowed and softened before the hero and heroine who are separated by them can be brought together. While Darcy is full of aristocratic pride, Elizabeth is filled with the prejudice that he is full of pride. The revelation of Darcy's true character comes only towards the very end and like Elizabeth, the reader too is very slow in recognizing his good qualities. From being a Jonsonian caricature, Darcy slowly emerges into an honourable and lovable human-being, in the course of the story. His character even becomes changed a little owning to the transforming power of love.

Though her other works, like *Emma* and *Persuasion* are excellent in their own way, *Pride and Perjudice* is unrivalled in displaying the finest elements of Jane Austen's art like brilliance, wit, satire and never-failing and entire felicity of expression. Of the heroine, Elizabeth, one of the most delightful in all English fiction, Jane Austen wrote : "I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print : how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her, at least, I do not know." A century of readers have shared Miss Austen's feelings about this favourite child of her imagination. She impresses us as being perfectly natural in the same way in which Falstaff or Mrs. Poyser or Sam Weller does, though no young woman could probably have been so unfailingly brilliant and humorous or could have combined in herself so much wit and charm, so much sense and character as Elizabeth Bennet. Jane Austen succeeds in investing characters like Elizabeth Bennet and her parents with a sense of actuality,

by the way in which art intensifies the qualities it wants to bring out. Though no man could have laughed at his family so consistently as Mr. Bennet did, and though no woman could have been so delightfully lacking in common-sense or intelligence as Mrs. Bennet was, the novelist's wonderful art makes both the husband and the wife convincing and alive.

The love-affair between the brilliant Elizabeth and the proud Darcy, is the most exciting in all Jane Austen's novels. In the words of John Bailey, he is the biggest fish that swims in any of Jane Austen's waters and, silly or not, we are happy that he has fallen into the basket of our dear Elizabeth. He is favourably contrasted with the other lover, Mr. Bingley and he stands out among Jane Austen's other heroes as "the most difficult to win and the most worth winning." In him we trace the difficult victory of love over pride. Though Darcy had some disagreeable qualities to begin with, these were slowly modified and purified by the power of love. Like Elizabeth herself, Darcy was something of a favourite with Jane Austen.

The book appeals to us by its very pleasing combination of irony and probability. Jane Austen shows us the play of "life's little ironies" without sacrificing the sense of probability. All the characters in the novel, except Mary Bennet and the scoundrel, Wickham, are highly realistic and perfectly drawn. Of all the novels of Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* is not only the most brilliant but also the strongest and the most realistic.

Mansfield Park, the third of Jane Austen's novels has hardly any plot and keeps no secret long. The humble, grateful, clear-judging Fanny Price is generally considered too low-spirited and submissive. She does not challenge the irony of which Elizabeth Bennet and Catherine Morland are the victims. The gay sharpness of *Pride and Prejudice* is here refined into greater subtlety and a gentler temper and finer modulation characterises the whole work. All the events are made to take their point and value from Fanny's connection with them. The novelist's chief concern is with Fanny's happiness and toward this all the other characters

are made to work unconsciously. Fanny's final and happy installation at *Mansfield Park*, in contrast to her first insignificance, forms, according to the author, "such a contrast as time is for ever producing between the plans and decisions of mortals, for their own instruction and their neighbours' entertainment." Though the didacticism is there, it is very delightfully swathed in irony for our entertainment. The feeling for beauty, particularly for beauty of character, as in the case of Fanny, is evident. The novelist watches over Fanny's fortunes with fond, parental care, determined that she should thrive against neglect and disregard and injustice. The ethical interest of Jane Austen's work is more predominant in *Mansfield Park* than anywhere else. The modesty and goodness of Fanny is the key to the book and we see all the characters through her spectacles. Though she appeals less to one's head than Elizabeth Bennet, she appeals more to the heart and in this respect she resembles Anne Elliot, the heroine of *Persuasion*.

In Edmund Bertram we have a thoroughly good, matter-of-fact, plain-spoken being who is far from being a picture of perfection. We feel that he will be a good husband to Fanny Price and also a good clergyman. In the Crawfords, brother and sister, we have Jane Austen's most amusing bad characters. Neither of them is very convincing or real, because they are the kind of people that Miss Austen did not know very intimately. The novelist's failure in investing the Crawfords with reality, partly accounts for *Mansfield Park* being considered by Bailey as the "least convincing and possibly the least brilliant of all" the novels.

Emma. Written between 1814 and 1815 and published in 1815, is the fourth among Jane Austen's novels, in the order of publication. In his review of the novel, published in the Quarterly Review, Scott pointed out "the neatness and point" with which Jane Austen tells her tale ; and the "quiet yet comic dialogue" through which the characters reveal themselves with dramatic effect. Scott was among the first to acknowledge the novelist's power of describing "the involvements and feelings of ordinary life." The art

which makes commonplace characters and incidents, interesting and the felicity of expression which gives a keen edge to her wit and humour are among the great gifts of Jane Austen and these are clearly revealed in *Emma*.

The heroine Emma stands out as unique among Jane Austen's heroines in one respect. In the course of the story "she learns and changes and grows." A blind, wilful and conceited girl, to begin with, she ends up as one who has been taught by bitter experience to see herself and others as they truly are. In this respect, she is comparable to Darcy whose character also changes and develops in the course of the story. As in the case of Darcy, in the case of Emma Woodhouse too, love is responsible for opening the eyes to the truth about character and situation. The opening of Darcy's eyes is a conscious and painful thing, while the opening of Emma's eyes to reality is a slow, unconscious and very entertaining process. The business of this novel, as well as of all other novels of Jane Austen, is to get people engaged and happily married. Emma is rightly regarded by most critics as a comedy of match-making errors.

The central character of the novel, namely Emma, is one of the best drawn of Jane Austen's characters. She believes she can see into the minds of other people and sets about the business of match-making in all earnestness. Before the story closes, she is so often chastened and humiliated. However, the ending is all bright and happy and the characters are left talking pleasantly of their past mistakes.

Northanger Abbey, written in 1719 and published in 1818 after the novelist's death, was a somewhat crude production, by the side of the novels already published, but it was too good to be put on the shell as Jane Austen had suggested. It is the most extravagant and violent of her novels, according to all critics and it is the farthest removed from probability. Jane Austen's chief intention, in writing the novel, was to satirise the novels of mystery like *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. When the thing satirised is a fashion, satire is the least permanent of all literary forms. Butler's Hudibras was very popular in its own day as a satire on the

puritans, but it is of much less interest to a world totally unacquainted with puritanism. Similarly, *Northanger Abbey* which is a satire on the world of Mrs. Radcliffe's Romances, cannot be as alive or interesting to the general reader as those other novels of Jane Austen which satirise vanity, vulgarity, selfishness and worldliness which have always characterised human-beings. In this novel, the business of ridiculing 'Romance' is given undue importance and on that account, the book is of less interest to people on whom the satire is lost.

The first two thirds of the book, where the incidents take place in Bath, is far more interesting than the rest. The characters in the novel are all young, the heroine Catherine being only fifteen, and as such, the youngest of Jane Austen's heroines. Henry Tilney is the youngest of her clergymen and one who takes his clerical duties more seriously than many others. Except Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, he is the only parson who is raised to the position of the hero of one of Jane Austen's novels. It is evident that Jane thought kindly of parsons like Henry and Edmund. Though *Northanger Abbey* is the least important and the least interesting of its author's works, it already shows her as an entertaining satirist. The vulgarity of John Thorpe and the foolishness and vanity of his sister are very interestingly portrayed. The unexpected effect of the vanity and dishonesty of Thorpe or the greed of General Tilney is brought out with a quick concentration and a sureness of touch which remind us of the maturer art of Jane Austen. In the conclusion of the novel, which is in the novelist's most characteristic vein, we find a most agreeable blending of satire and sympathy and a combination of the "critical and accepting view of human nature." It is these things which give the book its lasting value and importance.

Persuasion was Jane Austen's last book, having been completed less than a year before her death. John Bailey calls it, "the ripest, the mellowest, the most completely humane, of all her novels." It is the most romantic and tender of the stories of love-ending in marriage, which Jane has given us. Anne Elliot evokes our sympathy and

tenderness more than Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse, though we are certainly very much interested in both of them. To quote Bailey again, "There are few heroines in fiction whom we love so much, feel for so much, as we love and feel for Anne Elliot."

In the character of Anne Elliot, who is twenty-seven years old when the book opens, we find the conflict between two opposing schemes of values, those of prudence and those of love. Even though she can never abandon her commitment to the prudential values, she is so completely and convincingly human that the secret agony of her unfulfilled love affects us deeply. Even when Anne and Frederick are happily united at the end, the problem posed by the novel remains unresolved. There exists potentially in every relationship between man and woman the conflict between love and prudence.

There is much of tenderness and poetry in *Persuasion* than in the earlier novels. The passage describing Anne Elliot's feelings on discovering how much she mattered to Captain Wentworth, after all, is not parallelled in any of the earlier novels. The expression of tenderness and passion does not make the author forget either her humour or her commonsense. Pomposity and self-importance have never been more agreeably satirised than in the scene of the letting of Kellynch Hall. Similarly, the snobbery of rank is made contemptible in the behaviour of Mary Musgrove. Jane Austen always hated any display of false sentiment and this is seen in her frank comments on the characters. We are able to see much of the likes and dislikes of Jane Austen from these comments of hers. Through the character of Anne Elliot, she justifies sense against sensibility. She also shows us in this novel as in her other works, the middle way of human life where neither the heights nor the depths of humanity are to be met with. In *Persuasion*, more than in any other work, she makes us feel that the narrow world she portrays, is a place of joys and sorrows, quite moving in their own way and worthy to be pondered over.

Chapter V

SOME THEMES IN JANE AUSTEN

MARRIAGE AND COURTSHIP—SHATTERING OF ILLUSIONS AND PAINFUL WAY TO DISCOVERY OF TRUTH—SELF-RESTRAINT AND SELF-RECOGNITION

There are a few important themes which are treated again and again in Jane Austen's novels, though in each case the novelist is able to impart something of freshness and novelty to the treatment. The business of getting people engaged and married, is one of the important themes which the novelist takes up for treatment in novel after novel. In fact Jane Austen's interest in young people and in their loves and courtships is never exhausted or diminished. In novel after novel, we come across young men and women who are grouped into pairs of lovers and the story of the love and marriage of the most important of these pairs is made the theme of the story, with the stories of the other lovers serving to complete the interest of character and plot. It is evident from the novels that Jane Austen had certain deep convictions about love, courtship and marriage. These are brought out by the success or failure of the kinds of loves and marriages which she depicts in her novels. Lord David Cecil has stated Jane Austen's views on love and marriage in one sentence pregnant with meaning. He says, "It was wrong to marry merely for money, but it was silly to marry without it."

Jane Austen, sharing the opinion commonly held by her contemporaries and satisfied with the conditions that prevailed, was of the view that a young woman should marry, for love certainly, but in satisfactory conditions.

This was the most natural thing to do. She gives object-lesson to show how careful a young woman should be in marrying well, by describing the miserable conditions of living in the Portsmouth home of Fanny Price's family.

None of her heroines, marries entirely for love. Their inclinations are tempered into prudence and controlled by commonsense. The best example of this is Anne Elliot, who, after falling deeply in love with Captain Wentworth breaks off her engagement because the interfering snob Lady Russell persuades her that it would be imprudent to marry a poor naval officer who might be killed in the war. But later, having waited in vain for a better suitor to turn up, she discovers how much she still loves Wentworth. In fact, the mercenary view of marriage is proclaimed by many of her characters and practised by even more of them. Charlotte Lucas, the friend of Elizabeth Bennet, accepts the egregious Collins purely from practical considerations and is able to have the security and comfort of a home of her own, which we feel, must have mattered more to a woman in Jane Austen's days when independent careers for women were not common and the only way a woman could live in comfort and security was by marrying a man who could provide a home for her. Lady Bertram holds it to be Fanny's 'duty' to marry Crawford. Sir Thomas also acts on the principle that a woman should marry well, though he wraps up the doctrine in specious circumlocution. All the wicked and disagreeable people including General Tilney, Mary Crawford and a host of others take it for granted. We have to remember that the alternative to marriage, for a penniless but accomplished girl, was that of becoming a governess. But this is a calling which, in the eyes of Jane Eyre as well as Jane Fair fax, falls little short of slavery. In the words of Emma, we have an account of the usual inducements of women to marry. She says: "Without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be

so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's." She admits that if there were any prospects of her becoming a poor old maid like Miss Bates, she would marry the next day. As for the want of objects of interest or affection, which according to Emma is the point of inferiority in an unmarried woman, she would not suffer from it, with all the children of a sister she loved to care about. There is, in spite of the irony, a remarkable justice and truth at the bottom of Emma's remarks on marriage, Emma is only telling the truth when saying that she was rich enough, contented enough and comfortable enough not to marry. Of course it would make a difference if she were in love or if she were poor. Miss Austen, who had watched the effects of love in others, though we are not sure how far she had experienced the thing herself, had views upon love and marriage which were well reflected and sensible in her own age. Marianne Dashwood, though characterised by extreme sensibility and lack of sense at first is finally made to marry sensibly and choose for her husband Colonel Brandon who is no romantic hero. Anne Elliot is persuaded to wait, before giving way to her youthful passion and Emma soon finds out that a marriage with the smart but shallow Frank Churchill is not right for her. When she marries she makes the most prudent match as does Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice.* Fanny Price's marriage with Edmund Bertram is equally prudent from a worldly point of view. The kind of marriage which the heroine of each of her novels makes has made some readers to think that Jane Austen was a snob, when it came to marriage because she condones the snobbish view. She accepts it as right and proper for Darcy to struggle, though she rejoices at his struggling in vain, before bridging the social gulf between him and Mrs. Bennet's daughter. We could understand this better if we had some idea of the doctrine of subordination which was accepted by most people in Jane Austen's day.

All the strange misconceptions about Jane Austen's views on love and marriage are repudiated by the words

and conduct of her heroines who are as good as they are attractive. Elizabeth Bennet firmly repudiates Collins. Fanny rejects Crawford. Anne Elliot refuses to have her crafty cousin. The words in which they express themselves are not less eloquent than their actions. Marianne condemns Colonel Brandon's advancing years and flannel waistcoat, though, ironically, she marries him at last. Elizabeth criticises her friend Charlotte's calculating prudence. Anne Elliot speaks the language of fervent love when she says: "All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone." This warm and enthusiastic avowal roused Captain Wentworth to propose to her immediately.

Jane Austen, in all probability, knew much more about love than she cares to tell us explicitly. Mr. E. M Forster has declared: "She knows the facts; but they are not her facts." Miss Mary Lascelles perhaps has the last word on this subject when she remarks that Jane Austen's lovers walk off the stage into a sort of cloud, where it would be indecent on our part to follow them. There is about her portrayal of love and lovers a kind of charming reticence. When Knightley makes his proposal of marriage to Emma, she is for a moment struck dumb with happiness. Then instead of describing to us in precise terms, how she accepted the proposal; Jane Austen just writes: "She spoke then on being entreated. What did she say? Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does." Nothing could be more beautiful, brief and effective.

Apart from love and courtship, a very important theme of Jane Austen's novels is the shattering of illusion and painful way to discovery of truth. W. L. Cross in his *Development of the English Novel*, has some very interesting remarks to make on the illusions by which the men and women in Jane Austen's Novels are governed. He says: "A guiding principle of hers was that the lighter conduct of men and women results from their being dupes of misconception. 'One takes up a notion and lets it run away with

him,' as when the Rev. William Collins imagines that his fair cousin Elizabeth will jump at an opportunity of becoming his wife. One believes herself in the secret of everybody's feelings, and with unpardonable arrogance proposes to arrange everybody's destiny ; such are the irrepressible match-makers, and the inexperienced Emma, who at length sees the almost tragic consequences of 'the blunders of head and heart.' Herein, in the detailed application to life of Bacon's Idols of the Cave and the Market Place, lies in a large measure the humour of Jane Austen. The reader, being in the secret, looks on at the mistaken and mistaking actors, seeing men and women, variously obtuse, moving in shadows and half-lights."

From her first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility* to her last finished work, *Persuasion*, we find Jane Austen presenting to us characters who are the victim of various illusions. These illusions have to be gradually removed in the course of the story and the deluded and deluding men and women have to be awakened to a right sense of their own and other people's natures. Marianne Dashwood has her illusion about first attachments and of people dying of love when thwarted in their passion. But she lives to learn sense and to wake up sufficiently from her illusions about first love being final and marries a colourless man well beyond his first youth. In *Northanger Abbey*, we have the story of Catherine Morland, the ordinary prosaic girl of unmysterious origin with her head full of all kinds of romantic ideas popularised by the Gothic novel. In the course of the story, she gradually awakens from her Gothic dream, to have the growing realisation that the world is more sensible than she has believed it to be. In *Pride and Prejudice*, we see the hero and heroine labouring under delusions. Their delusions are the result of excessive pride on the one hand and undue prejudice on the other. Their eyes are gradually opened to each other's worth by the turn of events and when the illusions are all removed, there is nothing to prevent the hero and heroine from flying to each other's arms. It is interesting to note how, in the course of the story, Darcy becomes less and less proud and

Elizabeth becomes proportionally less and less prejudiced. As a novel of instruction, *Emma* centres around the faults of the heroine who is always wrong in her conclusions about people and thinks she is always right. In the course of the book, through the frustrations of her self-confident efforts to play God, she learns to know herself and other people better. The novel may be considered as a drawing-room comedy of self-deception. The gradual disclosure of the heroine's illusions is as amusing as it is instructive. In *Persuasion*, we have the story of Anne Elliot, who, as a girl of nineteen, allows herself to be persuaded by a well-meaning but ill-judging friend to give up the man she loves with all her heart. She is under the illusion that she would find happiness in thus having done her duty and repressed the claims of ardent youthful love. But fate seems to favour the lovers and after she has almost lost him, Anne is reunited with her lover whom she has loved all along. Looking back on the events of the past, Anne Elliot admits that she never would give the kind of advice which was given to her by Lady Russell. She says this because she has come to understand her own heart better after nearly losing her lover.

Self-restraint and self-recognition are two virtues which Jane Austen extols in her novels. Even in her first novel, we find her advocacy of self-restraint in the way in which Elinor Dashwood's character is held up for our admiration. While the lack of self-restraint leads Marianne to heartbreak disillusionment, misery and despair, Elinor's intelligence and self-control supports her in moments of dejection. Elinor is rewarded by marriage to an earnest and stolid but affectionate young clergyman. Thus we are shown how sense and self-restraint bring in their own rewards. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the virtue of self-restraint is taught by the ridicule to which the heady and reckless conduct of Lydia Bennet is subjected. In contrast to her, we have the intelligent self-controlled Elizabeth who is always mistress of her own self and never loses her balance. Self-restraint is again made the outstanding virtue of Fanny

Price who listens patiently to Edmund Bertram's protestations of love for Mary Crawford without once letting him know the love burning in her own heart. Her modesty and self-restraint, of course, have their reward. In *Emma* we have a kind of drawing-room comedy of self-deception in which Emma is finally awakened to self-recognition. With self-recognition comes the realization that she is in love, has always been in love, with Mr. Knightley and this brings her tremendous happiness. She awakens to a knowledge of her own illusions and becomes humbled in spirit as she knows herself better. In Anne Elliot, the heroine of *Persuasion*, we have a model of self-restraint, who while realising the claims of her warm human heart, is nevertheless determined to place duty and prudence above the aspirations of youthful love.

Chapter VI

JANE AUSTEN'S WORLD

ITS RESTRICTED AREA—WHY IT IS SO—THE IMPLICATIONS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS FACT—HOW IT CONDITIONS HER ART—THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY DIFFERENT CRITICS

The nature of Jane Austen's Craft and the limitations of her craft are defined when she speaks of the little bit of ivory (two inches wide) on which she works with so fine a brush as produces little effect after much labour. The world which she has portrayed in her novels, like the world in which her own short and uneventful life was passed, was a very narrow world. It was limited to the ranks between the baronet or substantially rich landlord and the lowest of the middle classes. She hardly ever attempts to portray the highest and the lowest classes of humanity. The glittering pageantry of the life of the court, or of the gay lords and ladies, is not to be met with in her novels. She does not, like Dickens, enable us to have an intimate view of the lives of the lowest and the lost who are outside the pale of respectable society. She does not portray for us truthful pictures of servants and underlines in the manner of Thackeray, not having "the backstair consciousness'' which he had. She never tries to portray the rustics who form an integral part of Hardy's novels and she does not bring into her novels artists or men of letters or any class of people she had not actually mingled with, or had occasion to study closely.

Jane Austen was born at Steventon, a country-village in the heart of rural England, in the north of Hampshire. Her life as passed in the world of the country gentry and her business in this world was that of a good-looking young

woman and much-loved maiden aunt who was very sociable and very much liked by everyone. Her furniture of belief and custom was not essentially different from that of most other spinsters, but unlike them she had the surest artistic conscience, the unrivalled gift of style and story-telling and "a native power of ironical miniature."

Her own little world and the everyday affairs and incidents connected with it, like marriages, births and deaths and balls and dinners, had completely engaged her attention during her life-time. She has attempted to give us, in her novels, very close and faithful renderings of the life of this narrow world of hers and the uneventful happenings in it. Characteristically she leaves out of view what Bentham or Cobbett saw in contemporary England. So also she ignores the French Revolution, though on account of it a dear relative of hers had lost her noble French husband. The public abuses, the political events and the kind of stuff which usually finds its way into history books had no attraction for Jane Austen and she tried to avoid them in her pictures of life. She was content with what she could really do and do with consummate success and this was that made her the mistress of the novel of manners. "The rectory, the country mansion, the small town, the professional circle, with rare sallies to Bath or Portsmouth of Lyme, these are the boundaries of her life and art." As she herself declared, "three or four families in a country-village, is the very thing to work upon." This being her idea of writing a novel, no adventurers outside the smooth and narrow path of daily domestic life appear in her works. She does not care to explore either the heights of passion or the depths of tragedy. We do not come across villains or crimes in her novels. All the characters, important and unimportant, belong to one small circle or social group from which the titled aristocrat and the penniless beggar are kept out. All the characters in a novel of Jane Austen, are born and settled in the same small town or village in the heart of England in which the story takes place. Wholly ignorant of the world which lies outside the borders of gentility, she never tries to adventure into it. Though the novel has own

so many triumphs and has unfolded so many new and rare experiences and passions since the days of Jane Austen, readers still delight in the familiar little world of her novels because of the consummate art and the vivid realism with which it is portrayed. Some readers and critics have called the novelist cold and petty because in all her works excepting *Northanger Abbey*, she turned her back upon the stage of contemporary history, both political and literary, where great transformations were taking place. According to Richard Church, "it is a matter for congratulation over the grand health of letters" that at a time when so much of extravagance and modishness were poisoning the literary atmosphere, consequent upon the eruption of Romanticism, we have the spectacle of a novelist so impervious to the influence of contemporary events and problems.

Jane Austen does not give us a full picture of even the narrow section of society which is reflected in the six novels. She tells us of what a lady in her position could have known intimately by careful observation of the life that went on around her. Servants and the lower classes, in general are deliberately omitted because she did not know them as intimately as she knew Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse. We are told of Emma's kindness to the poor and her offices of charity but we hardly see the poor wretches or hear them. Even the gentleman farmer like Robert Martin who is finally admitted by Emma to be a good enough a husband for her friend Harriet, is never made to speak a word or to appear in person before the readers. He is said to have written a very nice and proper letter, but it is only discussed, not printed. Similarly Jane Austen refuses to give us anything but a fleeting glimpse of the aristocracy. Usually its members are satirised to our great enjoyment. There is Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the daughter of an earl, evoking our heartfelt contempt by her arrogant and pretentious stupidity. In *Mansfield Park* we are introduced to the Honourable John Yates, the high-living and low-thinking companion of young Tom Bertram and his conduct is inconsiderate, insensitive, and silly. The Dowager Viscountess Darlymple and her daughter, in the opinion of the

sensible Anne Elliot, are "nothing." Colonel Fitzwilliam is the only unexceptionable member of the aristocracy but he is merely a flat, functional character who is brought in to buttress Elizabeth's pride by telling her how Darcy has been trying to break up the attachment between Bingley and Jane. All the characters in Jane Austen's novels are included in the "country gentry" occasionally admitting within its ranks the Coles and the Gardiners, much as Jane Austen herself did. But even about the gentry she does not tell us everything. She does not tell us how they were affected by the great events of the day. From the stories that she has written and the characters she has introduced to us, we are not in a position, to guess that her period was that of the first generation of Romantic poets, the French Revolution, and the War of American Independence. Jane Austen has carefully kept politics out of her novels. When Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney began talking on politics, "It was an easy step to silence." It is interesting to note that men hardly appear in Jane Austen's novels, except in the company of women, because it is thus that the novelist knew them. What we get in the six great novels of Miss Austen is a faithful account of the ordinary social intercourse of the gentry, with the emphasis on the woman.

Jane Austen is the supreme example of an artist working strictly within her own range and succeeding so splendidly because she never tries to stretch and strain beyond her own limits. Though almost all her readers and critics will agree that her novels are the triumphant proof of the wisdom of knowing how to work within one's limited range, some of them have felt that her range is far too narrow and circumscribed. It is therefore profitable to examine what her admirers and detractors have to say on the subject.

Sir Walter Scott, her celebrated contemporary, was one of her earliest and most sensible admirers. In his Quarterly Review article he says : "Keeping closs to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of such spirit and originality, that

we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events, arising from the consideration of minds, manners, and sentiments greatly above our own." Scott goes on to describe very accurately the social class which Miss Austen has sketched with originality and precision and ends by saying: "That young lady had a talent for deserving the involvements, and feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the descriptions and the sentiment, is denied to me."

Macaulay is another ardent admirer who has compared Jane Austen to Shakespeare. He says, "Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers........ who have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all in a certain sense, commonplace, all such as we meet everyday. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human-beings."

Over against these enthusiastic comments on Jane Austen's works, we have to set the dissenting views expressed by two celebrated writers, Wordsworth and Charlotte Bronte. Wordsworth admired the accuracy of her delineations but felt that they would have much more appealing if the truth of nature were presented as it were, clarified by the pervading light of imagination. Like Wordsworth, Charlotte Bronte praises Jane Austen for her realistic delineations but finds fault with her want of imagination and her neglect of the passions. She says: "The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition.....what sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the

blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentiment target of death, this Miss Austen ignores."

To this celebrated attack made by a fellow-novelist on Jane Austen, Andrew H. Wright has given the right answer. He has pointed out that while accusing Jane Austen of dealing merely with the surface of the lives of genteel people, Miss Bronte was mistaking dispassionate treatment for superficiality. Wright points out that in Jane Austen's treatment of her characters and themes, there is implied a close acquaintance with "that stormy sisterhood." the passions, and much more than "an occasional graceful but distant recognition" of the feelings. There is passion enough in Marianne Dashwood's devotion to Willoughby and in Anne Elliot's to Captain Wentworth, and Emma reproaches herself for her lack of "tenderness of heart." Charlotte has also left out entirely Jane Austen's moral concern, according to Wright. He points out that "her three or four families in a country-village no more limit her than the Danish nobility confines Shakespeare in *Hamlet*."

As Robert Liddell has pointed out, everyone knows the story of the Prince Regent's Librarian who tried to tempt Jane Austen into writing "an historical romance illustrative of the august house of Coburg." She firmly refused to do so and humbly declared her intention of keeping within her own range, thus acting in the wisest manner. What she has given in her novels is "neat, perfectly composed, sharply focussed pictures." She has succeeded in giving us, within the small section of humanity she has chosen to represent, the greatest comic character in all English fiction. Within her small world, "she had known affection, boredom, anxiety, love and loss, hatred and impatience." Out of these experiences she had created her six great novels which develop themes of the broadest significance and go beyond mere social record, to broad allegories. In these sense, sensibility, pride, prejudice, shallowness, meanness, selfishness, love, honour and many other virtues and defects of our fellowmen are set forth in narrative form and made

more impressive and appealing by making the character and incidents to imply much more than what they embody.

About the world that Jane Austen has represented in her novels and about her truthfulness to life, the following passage from W. L. Cross's *Development of the English Novel* is worth recording : The matter of observation, in passing through Jane Austen's imagination, was never violently disturbed ; the particular bias was received from a delicate and delightful irony ; there was precisely that selection and recombination and heightening of incident and character that distinguish the comedy of manners from real life."

Chapter VII

JANE AUSTEN'S IRONY

ITS MORAL TONE AND METHOD OF EXPRESSION—HOW IT HELPS US IN GRASPING THE WORLD WHICH JANE AUSTEN WANTS TO PRESENT

Andrew H. Wright, speaking about the materials and themes of Jane Austen's novels makes the following remark: "The novels can, I think, be considered on three levels of meaning: first, the purely local, that is, they can be looked at as illustrative of country-life among the upper middle classes in southern England at the end of the 18th century. Second, they can be taken as broad allegories, in which Sense, Sensibility, Pride, Prejudice, and a number of other virtues and defects are set forth in narrative form and commented on in this way. Third, there is the ironic level, and if Jane Austen's novels be considered in this light, then one can regard the various incidents, situations, and characters as implying something beyond what they embody, as symbolic rather than allegorical." The novels of Jane Austen are not merely the records of social life made by an amused and attentive spectator of the contemporary scene in rural England; nor are they merely didactic interpretations of human life and experience. Her themes are in the main ironic because she has a perception of the contradictions in human experience which yields a detachment and a detachment which grants a perception. "There is, in her disengagement, an objectivity which is not scientific, because not disinterested. In fact she is deeply concerned with both aspects of the contradictions she perceives: searching the orchards of human experience she finds the bittersweet fruit of confusing appearance and ambiguous essence and she becomes a person of the divided,

the ironic, vision.'' Professor Chevalier asserts that the basic feature of every irony is a contrast between a reality and an appearance. Prefessor Mudirick writing on Jane Austen, calls irony a "natural discoverer and exploer of congruities.'' No ironist can be doctrinaire. "Irony comes as the result of the quest for meaning in the universe, as the result of human experience. This result is the divided vision, that of Chaucer, Cervantes, Swift, and Jane Austen.

Jane Austen was a mistress of Irony and it is at play everywhere in her letters and novels. But here were life's little ironies which evoke comic, not tragic sentiments and hence they are to be distinguished from the tragic and grim ironies which we come across in the novels of Thomas Hardy. The nature of irony in Jane Austen can be understood by a critical study of her six great novels. About the use of irony in *Pride and Prejudice,* the most famous of her novels, Bailey says : "She was a mistress of irony ; it is at play everywhere in all her letters. At play : for hers were really 'life's little ironies' ; not the grim ones to which Mr. Hardy gave that name. And it is at play continually all through *Pride and Prejudice.* Everything goes by contraries and yet everything is natural and probable. All the characters do the opposite of what they wish to do and experience the opposite of what they and others expect them to experience ; and yet we, who look on, see that what they do and suffer and enjoy is in them from the first. Sometimes the irony lies even in the fulfilment of expectation, as when Charlotte says that 'it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life' ; and does not know that she will marry Mr. Collins, Mr. Darcy at his first sight of Elizabeth is 'in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men' and has no notion how much meaning there may be in 'at present.' Miss Bingley, setting her cap at Darcy, again and again forces from him the praise of Elizabeth which is to her the most disagreeable sound on earth, and which, but for her, he might not have uttered. Darcy does what his sense of honour really forbids him to do in order to prevent

his friend marrying a Miss Bennet; and he marries one himself. Lady Catherine demeans herself to forbid Elizabeth to accept Darcy, who has not in fact proposed, with the result that her report of her interview gives him the courage to do so. Mrs. Bennet thinks Darcy the most disagreeable man in the world; and declares she will 'go distracted' with delight directly she hears he is to be her son-in-law. Mr. Bennet thinks Darcy 'a proud unpleasant sort of man'; and, in his blind detachment from the affairs of his family, asks Elizabeth, after he hears of the proposal, whether she had not 'always hated him;' but has his eyes rather forcibly opened by what she has to tell him: at once becomes himself again with 'If any young man come for Mary or Kitty, send them in, I am quite at leisure'; and is able, the very next day, to say to Elizabeth: 'I admire all my three sons-in-law highly. Wickham, perhaps, is my favourite: but I think I shall like your husband quite as well as Jane's."

In *Mansfield Park* again we come across the most splendid use of irony. The best things in it are the conversations in which Edmund Bertram either consults Fanny about whether he should propose to Mary Crawford or advises her to marry Henry Crawford. The irony consists in his being totally unaware of the fact that all the time Fanny is in love with him. Jane Austen delights in the use of this ancient device which was so dear to the Greek dramatists. In the tragedies of the ancient dramatists like Sophocles, there are many conversations in which the spectator or reader perceives a significance quite concealed from one or both of the actors or speakers.

Emma is a novel drenched in irony. The business of this novel, like that of other novels of Jane Austen is to get people engaged and married. Everybody in *Emma* is busy about this all-important business and everybody blunders. Emma supposes Mr. Elton to be in love with Harriet, Harriet to be in love with Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax to be in love with Mr. Dixon and Mr. Knightley to have some interest in Jane. As soon as Frank Churchill comes to Highbury he imagines himself

to be in love with her and in a little while she fancies that she is in love with him. The irony lies in her failing to realise that Mr. Elton is paying his attentions to her and not to Harriet and that Frank Churchill while encouraging her to speak ill of Jane Fairfax is secretly engaged to her. She encourages Harriet to elevate her thoughts to some one who is her social superior, little realising that Harriet would take it to mean her looking up to Mr. Knightley as her prospective suitor. The supreme irony consists in Emma's remaining blind as long as blindness is possible, to Mr. Knightley's devotion to herself and even to her own love of him. Most of the other characters blunder with Emma, though not so badly and the result of all this is that the novel becomes a comedy of match-making errors. The irony of *Emma* is that the tenderness of heart which Jane Austen's heroine possesses opposes itself to sharpness and clarity of perception.

Examining her very first published work, *Sense and Sensibility*, we find that it is on the ironic level that the depth of the book becomes evident. The theme of the book, as stated in the title, is Sense and Sensibility. Throughout the book, it appears that sensibility is to be over-thrown by sense as illustrated by the prudent marriage which Marianne ultimately makes. But we see that, by a parallel irony, Elinor the sensible marries for love, a man who is discovered to be energetic, passionate and sensitive. There is an irreconcilable contradiction set up between the two modes, and there is a deep ambivalence. What is most significantly illustrated by the book is that both sense and sensibility are desirable and even necessary, for living a whole life, though they are mutually exclusive. "Thus the novel goes beyond the boundaries of satire, it exceeds the requirements of pure comedy, and becomes ironic ; the not insubstantial theme of the book is that the claims of Sense and Sensibility are irreconcilable." The book is to be considered as more than a didactic treatise in which sense is exalted and sensibility is denounced. Elinor and Marianne are given equal status as heroines and the arrangement of the story draws obvious parallels

between the two girls. It is this duality which gives the story substance and depth.

Even *Northanger Abbey* goes beyond the limits of burlesque to explore the boundaries of good sense, with tenderness and perception. We find that Catherine Morland, is basically sensible, her only areas of illusionment being those which the novel of terror might involve her in. But the novel takes on a dimension beyond that of commonsense since that attribute will not allow Catherine to deal adequately with her summary dismissal from *Northanger Abbey*. Commonsense will not enable her to console herself completely when she can no longer expect to marry Henry Tolney. Having returned home she realises that there are some situations of the human mind in which good sense had little power. So the novel which has started as a burlesque ends as a critique not only of the Gothic novel, but also of commonsense which Jane Austen highly esteems, but whose limitations she has the courage to set-forth.

In *Persuasion* the story is one of the conflict between parental authority or prudence on the one hand, the sanguine hopes for love on the other. Here, as in the earlier novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, Prudence and love are in conflict. Both qualities are seen to be desirable, and both are defended with warm sympathy by Jane Austen. We are also shown that neither can be achieved without some sacrifice of the other. This illustrates the truth that Jane Austen is a writer with the ironic or divided vision, who sees at the same time both sides of the coin.

It is possible for the ironist to look at the contradictions in human nature either tragically or comically, depending upon facts and dispositions not easily separable from his inclination to irony. Still there is a general tendency to think that irony and humour must coexist as it does in Jane Austen. There may be irony without humour as when Oedipus diligently searches for the slayer of King Loius, not realising that he himself has done the deed The irony of Jane Austen does not belong to this tragic kind. It is an irony which is characterised by recognition of the antitheses

in human experience. Here is an interested objectivity. She is detached but not indifferent, withdrawn but not removed. She may, as an observer of human life be moved to compassion, disgust, laughter, disdain, or sympathy, as she perceives the contradictions between appearance and reality. Her ironic view of life is effectively brought out by the subject, structure, characterisation and style of the novels. Irony, considered as the stylistic technique of reversal or transformation of literal meaning, is often used by Jane Austen to expose the laughable qualities of a character or to underline a decided judgement. For example, she wholly condemns the Rev. William Collins whose orotund letters are meant to be read with an eye to the unconscious ridicule which they contain. Again we see how Marianne Dashwood is both the target of her comedy and the subject of her irony when Jane Austen says that she "was *reasonable* enough to allow that a man of five and thirty might well have outlived *all* acuteness of feeling and *every* exquisite power of enjoyment. She was perfectly disposed to make *every* allowance for the colonel's advanced state of life which humanity required." Though at first heading these opinions seem to be those of the author, we can immediately realise the irony from the words, reasonable, all, and advanced state of life, used here. Understatement is often made use to emphasise the irony of a passage as in the description of Mrs. Jennings in *Sense and Sensibility*. "Mrs. Jennings was a widow with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world." The irony is contained in the last phrase which gives us an idea of the triviality of Mrs. Jenning's existence. Jane Austen's stylistic use of understatement deepens as she moves from the early novels to the complexities of *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. She writes of the two Miss Bertrams : "It is not very wonderful that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirement of self-knowledge, generosity and humility." The irony here is unmistakable. In *Emma*, we come across the following

passage about the heroine after her accepting Mr. Knightley: "It is *remarkable* that *Emma*, in the many, very many, points of view in which she was now beginning to consider Donwell Abbey, was never struck with any sense of injury to her nephew Henry, whose rights as heir-expectant had formerly been so tenaciously regarded." The novelist in using the word remarkable here, is amusingly reminding us of the distance that her heroine has already gone towards knowing herself. There is again splendid irony in the way in which Jane Austen implies the human contradiction between sympathy and concern with petty matters as she refers to the death of Mrs. Churchill : "It was felt as such things must be felt. Everybody had a degree of gravity and sorrow ; tenderness towards the departed, solicitude for the surviving friends ; and, in a reasonable time, curiosity to know where she would be buried." On the whole, one can say that Jane Austen's irony, so far as style is concerned, is much more pervasive than the usual rhetorical categories will allow. Along with the irony brought out by character and incident, this irony expressed in her style of writing is responsible for Jane Austen's front rank among English novelists.

Chapter VIII

JANE AUSTEN'S SATIRE

"Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me and I laugh at them whenever I can." These words spoken by Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* can, with equal truth, be applied to her creator. Jane Austen has often been labelled as a social satirist because the observation and record of follly and meanness and pretence in her most conspicuous talent as a novelist. Though her books contain much more than the satirical comments on human follies and weaknesses, the satire of Jane Austen, often conveyed through a pleasing irony, has been among her most important qualities as a novelist.

In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen satirised the literary traditions of the sentimental and the Gothic novels. In *Northanger Abbey* we have very youthful satire on the excesses of the Gothic novel, but if the book did not contain anything more than this it would not have had half its appeal for us. In spite of her being a little crude and extravagant in some respects, Jane Austen is here seen to be already an entertaining satirist. John Thorpe's vulgarity and his sister's emptiness, both of heart and head come in for brilliant satiric treatment. Bailey says about John Thorpe : "His vanity, and the lies which flow from it so spontaneously, are natural enough ; and the unintended and undesired effect which they produce on the greed of General Tilney is very pleasant in itself and is told with a swift concentration and a certainty of stroke worthy of the maturer hand which gave us *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*."

The very last words of the book unite satire and sympathy, being expressive of the critical and accepting view of life and human nature. There is the fine summing up characteristic of Jane Austen at her best, in the following passage : "To begin perfect happiness at the respective

ages of twenty-six and eighteen is to do pretty well; and professing myself, moreover, convinced that the General's unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it, by improving their knowledge of each other, and adding strength to their attachment, I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny or reward filial disobedience."

In *Sense and Sensibility* the sentimentalists are satirised in more sub-dued irony. The book may be looked upon as a protest against the 'romantic' fashions then becoming popular. Here Jane Austen is seen ridiculing the preference of tumble-down cottages to comfortable house, and the taste for the new landscapes which put blasted or crooked trees in place of tall and healthy ones. She also laughs at such notions as that first loves were fatal and final and that second marriages were unpardonable. These romantic follies are satirised in Marianne Dashwood, who, instead of being allowed to die of love is sensibly led to marry Colonel Brandon and his flannel waistcoat and is expected to find happiness in the union. The business of the book is to send a silly and rather selfish girl like Marianne through the painful experiences which turn selfishness into kindness and silliness into sense. The finest satirical touch in the novel is that of making Elinor Dashwood the transmitter to Edward Ferrars of the offer of the living which alone will enable him to marry her rival. If in these last two chapters of the book, the satire on human nature is less brilliantly barbed than that in the conversation between the John Dashwoods, it has more heart in it as well as wit and absurdity. It would not be so delightful if it did not come from a writer like Jane Austen who had a head that thought about life and a heart that felt it.

Coming to *Pride and Prejudice*, we find some very excellent satirical portraits of human follies, weaknesses and eccentricities. Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet, Rev. Collins, Lady Catherine are all highly amusing satirical portraits meant for our entertainment and instruction. When we read the book, we do not ask ourselves whether any husband and father

ever gave himself so continuously and humourously as Mr. Bennet, to that business of laughing at his family which he makes us enjoy as much as he enjoyed it himself. Similarly, though in actual life it would be hard to discover a woman who never says a sensible thing, the magic of Jane Austen's art, has made her satirical portrait of Mrs. Bennet alive and convincing from the first. As for the immortal Collins, we have in his character, a highly entertaining satirical Portrait of a very stupid and very snobbish clergyman. His self-importance, his stupidity, his snobbishness have all been convincingly, though satirically, portrayed. In Lady Catherine, his patroness, self-importance and snobbery are given an equally entertaining satirical portrayal.

In *Emma*, there is the finest satirical treatment of the heroine's follies and vanities. Her high opinion of her power of seeing into the hearts of other people and of ordering their lives according to her own foolish notions is held up to ridicule. Jane Austen delights in showing us how Emma's vanity and self-esteem are checked at every turn as she makes one mistake after another. In addition to the heroine herself there are three important characters who are satirically treated. One is Mrs. Elton who is purse-proud and snobbish and is incessantly talking of her brother-in-law's barouche-landau and of people having extensive grounds! Again and again Jane Austen makes her say and do things which expose her vanity, snobbery and lack of good taste and good sense in a very amusing fashion. In the highly entertaining comic character of Miss Bates, we see that Jane Austen's satire is merciless and that it admits no extenuation. About her, Bailey makes the following comment : "Miss Bates is incomparable : among all the attempts to put incessant and inconsequent garrulity upon the stage of the novel this one of Jane Austen stands out alone in solitary certainty of success. Miss Bates's chatter is so lifelike that those who know nothing about the art of creation might suppose it to have been taken down by a shorthand writer." According to Bradley, Mr. Woodhouse is next to Don Quixote in satirical portraiture. He delights us by his eccentricities as he delighted those around him. We cannot help admiring the

kindly satire which, while laughing at characters like Miss Bates and Mr. Woodhouse, invests them with a tender and sympathetic humanity which is so lovable. These two rivals to Lady Catherine and Rev. Collins, have in them the essentials of good breeding and good-heartedness which deserve our love and respect.

In *Mansfield Park*, we find Jane Austen's satirical powers engaged in portraying for us the disagreeable characters like Mrs. Norris, the Crawfords and the Miss Bertrams. Her observation was so keen and her satire so pointed that nothing of folly or nonsense or vanity or snobbishness ever escaped her. However slight the manifestation of a weakness may be and however muffled it may be by convention or the disguise of personal charm, Jane Austen's satire invariably holds it up to ridicule. This is seen from the ironic way in which she speaks about the Miss Bertrams. They "joined to beauty and brilliant acquirements a manner naturally easy and carefully formed to general civility and obligingness...Their vanity was in such good order that they seemed to be quite free from it, and gave themselves no airs : while the praises attending such behaviour served to strengthen them in believing they had no faults." In these few words the character of the Miss Bertrams is most effectively satirised. In Mrs. Norris we have one of the most odious specimens of humanity. Henry Crawford and his sister Mary Crawford are both base characters. While Henry is characterised by intellect, charm, boundless good humour, tempering a cold-blooded cynical selfishness, Mary Crawford is a satirical portrait of a heartless, selfish flirt.

In *Persuasion*, we find Jane Austen admirably satirising the purse-proud and pompous character in Sir Walter Elliot who is extremely proud of his high birth and who invites some comparison with the snobbish Mrs. Elton in *Emma*. Pomposity and self-importance have seldom been more harshly criticised than they are in the scene of the letting of Kellynch Hall. Similarly the snobbery of rank is made most contemptible in Mary Musgrove's insistence on having precedence over her mother-in-law at a seaside lodging where her husband's sister is hovering between life and

death. She victimises everybody around her through her selfishness, snobbery and imaginary illness, all the time believing herself to be the injured innocent. She blunders on through the novel to our great entertainment as well as exasperation, pitying herself and preventing anybody else from pitying her. Sir Walter is quite absurd and pleasantly unconscious of his absurdity. "There is no more agreeable satire in Jane Austen than Sir Walter on Admiral Croft or Admiral Croft on Sir Walter," says Bailey. Jane Austen had a Johnsonian contempt and dislike of all false sentiment. This is brought out by the passage describing the death of Mrs. Churchill in *Emma* as well as by the description of Mrs. Musgrove's large, fat sighings over the death of a very troublesome and hopeless son whom no one had cared for, while he was alive. Jane Austen's wealth of sympathy is not reserved for the prime objects of her love, but is liberally extended to the objects of her ridicule as well. Even in real life she could heartily love a fool. One thing we have to note about the portrait of Miss Bates is that it is substantial and beautiful because her author knew and loved her absurd old maid for her virtues and her poverty as well as for her folly. Mr. Woodhouse does not tire us or exasperate us with his eccentricities. We bear with him as Emma and Mr. Knightley and their friends bore with him because of his kind solicitude for others which made him ask Jane Fairfax as she came in from the rain, "My dear, did you change your stockings." He is all solicitude and consideration for the health of his neighbours that in spite of all his hospitality he can hardly allow them to eat enough of the good fare Emma provides when they are entertained at Hartfield. Miss Bates is a person we all must laugh at because the perfect art of her great speeches makes them exquisitely laughable. But we never lose patience with her and Jane Austen, like Knightley could not forgive Emma for her cruelty to the simple, kindly old woman. Jane Austen's satire gives us a great deal of harmless pleasure and it also instructs while pleasing us. This troubled world, groping for guidance but impatient of discipline has room for such a writer as Jane Austen in the opinion of R. W. Chapman. He says that to the thoughtful reader her satires can give what Boswell got from the *Rambler*, namely, "Bark and Steel for the mind."

Chapter IX

JANE AUSTEN'S USE OF NOVEL AS AN ART FORM

A DETAILED CONSIDERATION OF HER CRAFTSMANSHIP—HER SENSE OF FORM AND DESIGN—SUBORDINATION OF PARTS TO WHOLE—SATISFYING FORM OF HER NOVELS—HER ACHIEVEMENT IN THIS FIELD.

In reading the novels of Jane Austen we feel that we are in the hands of one of those rare artists who know perfectly well how to choose the exact material that suits them and who are blessed with that magic power of creation which, out of the dullness, and insignificance of everyday incidents can evoke the definite form and order, the interest and distinction by which art gives immortality to life. It is true she did not achieve perfection in her art with her very first effort. *Sense and Sensibility*, her first published novel, has some of the crudities of a beginner though it is also characterised by many of her excellences as a novelist. From *Sense and Sensibility* to *Persuasion*, we notice a steady growth and development of Jane Austen's powers as an artist which place her in the first rank of English novelists.

The spinster daughter of a country parson, Jane Austen not only limits herself to the sphere of life which she understands but also makes her own selection among the raw-materials of experience available to her. Hence her novels are the quietest among all the great novels of the world, being entirely free from tragic events or violent emotions. Jane Austen had found life as enjoyable and amusing as we find it in her novels and she has transmitted to us her keen observation and enjoyment of this life through her great novels. Speaking about the way she

proceeded about her work, one cannot help recalling what she wrote to her favourite niece, Fanny, who was trying her hand at novel-writing. "Three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on," wrote Jane Austen. We must admit that even within such a narrow range she does not by any means plumb every depth. Fully conscious of her own limitations, Jane Austen leaves out of her work whatever she cannot personally know and emphasizes material which is most malleable to her talent. When the most popular novelists of her day deliberately dispensed with the narrow facts of life, she was content to work on her "little bit (two inches wide) of Ivory" and herein lies her great success as a novelist.

As Scott, one of the earliest and most intelligent of her admirers observed, "keeping close to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of such spirit and originality, that we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events, arising from the consideration of minds, manners, and sentiments, greatly above our own." As to the social class represented in her novels we find that Jane Austen confines herself to the middling classes of society and that her most distinguished personages do not rise very much above well-bred ladies and gentlemen and those which are sketched with most originality and accuracy are people belonging to a class rather below that standard. It is interesting to note what Scott has to say about Jane Austen's handling of her material and to contrast it with what Charlotte Bronte had to say in disparagement of her work. Scott enthusiastically observes, "That young lady (Jane Austen) had a talent for describing the involvements, and feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going ; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me."

Macaulay was so impressed by the great variety in the multitude of commonplace characters Jane Austen has given

us, that he wrote, "Among the writers who..........have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, (Shakespeare) we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all, such as we meet everyday. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human-beings."

Charlotte Bronte found in Jane Austen's novels "a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy; no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses." She complains that Jane Austen's materials are "the surface of the lives of genteel people' that she avoids the 'outer' and the extravagant. But while praising the 'Chinese fidelity' and miniature delicacy in Jane Austen's treatment of her materials, Charlotte Bronte bewails the absence of "that stormy sisterhood—the passions," in her work. But here we have to say that in Jane Austen's treatment of her materials, there is, by implication, at least, all the passions that stir the human breast and that there is much more than "an occasional graceful but distant recognition of the feelings." There is passion in Marianne Dashwood's devotion to her Willoughby, and Anne Elliot's love for Captain Wentworth. Emma is found reproaching herself for her want of tenderness of heart. Jane Austen's fervent preoccupation with moral concerns, with the way people behave, is an important element in her work which Charlotte Bronte ever looked. According to Andrew H. Wright, "Jane Austen's three or four families in a country village no more limit her than the Danish nobility confines Shakespeare in Hamlet."

Speaking about the way Jane Austen has dealt with her materials in her six great novels, H. W. Garrod has some very disparaging remarks to make. He speaks of "A drab scenery the worse for use; a thin plot unfashionably cut, and by turning, re-lining and trimming made to do duty for five or six novels; a dozen or so stock characters—

these are Miss Austen's materials." There is some truth in part of what Mr. Garrod says, because the scene of her novels is always a village or something very much like it. Meryton, Mansfield Park, Highbury and Kellynch have nothing to do with town and cities. In this setting is placed a marriageable maiden—Marianne Elizabeth, Fanny, Emma or Anne. To the village comes, on some business or pretext, a very eligible young bachelor like Willoughby, Darcy, Crawford, Churchill or Wentworth or he may be living close by like Knightley. Each heroine is provided with a foil or rival. Marianne is portrayed by the side of Elinor, Elizabeth has her sister Jane, while Fanny is placed by the side of Mary and Emma by the side of Jane. Anne Elliot has two foils, in Miss Elliot and Mary Musgrove. But as we read the novels, we never feel any monotony which may naturally arise from such parallelism. What we cannot help feeling on reading Jane Austen's novels is that plot, as such, is not very important in a novel. It is only of importance in serving as a framework in which the characters can have free movement and sentiment can find full expression. Within a given framework such as the three or four families in a country-village, Jane Austen knows how to bring in plenty of variety both in character and incident so that any of her novels is as different from the others as one goodlooking woman may be quite different from half a dozen other beauties in a group.

Speaking about Jane Austen's contribution to the art of fiction, W. L. Cross says that she is a realist who brought back to the novel an art and a style which it once had, particularly in Fielding, but which it had since lost. But the difference between her art and that of Fielding lies in the fact that in the handling of character and events she left much less to chance than Fielding. Fielding makes use of an extraordinary series of events in getting Partridge from Somerset to the London play-house. This is quite different from what Jane Ansten would have done. She brings together her village-folk and their visitors from the neighbouring town or district at the dinner-party or the ball in much the same way as they would meet in actual

life. We are never at a loss to understand why a certain young lady or a certain young gentleman happens to be present. It may be true that there never may have occurred a ball exactly like the one described in *Mansfield Park* or the one arranged by the young folk of Highbury at the Crown. There may not have been a strawberry party like the one described in *Emma* or a picnic like the one to Box Hill. What Jane Austen does in her novels is not merely to transcribe actual scenes or experiences. Her method was to build up scenes and personages in her imagination, taking details from what had already been stored in her memory by her observation of life. But "the matter of observation, in passing through Jane Austen's imagination, was never violently disturbed ; the particular bias it received was from a delicate and delightful irony ; there was precisely that selection and recombination and heightening of incident and character that distinguish the comedy of manners from real life."

Like Fielding Jane Austen constructed her novels after the analogy of the ancient drama. Novels like *Pride and Prejudice*, not only have the humour of Shakespearean comedy but also its technique. Elizabeth Bennet meets Darcy at a village-ball and becomes prejudiced against him because of the general hauteur of his bearing toward the village-girls and especially because of his remarking to his friend, Bingley, that though she is tolerable she is not handsome enough to tempt him to dance with her. With great artistic skill the novelist now handles events to bring about the deepening of Elizabeth's prejudice and the awakening of Darcy's love, in spite of his pride, prejudice and proud love having reached the proper degree of intensity the hero and heroine are brought together at the Hunsford personage which becomes the scene of an arrogant and insulting proposal of marriage and its indignant refusal. From this point, we see Jane Austen at the height of her craftsmanship. By easy gradations Elizabeth's prejudice is removed and Darcy is humbled so that the marriage between them becomes quite natural and inevitable.

Workmanship of this high order is easily parallelled in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Emma is another of Jane Austen's novels which R. W. Chapman greatly admires for the matchless symmetry of its design and the endless fascination of its technique. Having introduced her heroine in whom universal spoiling at home and admiration abroad have produced a certain conceit and arrogance of mind, Jane Austen deliberately sets the stage for her humiliation. Emma's misapprehensions of Harriet, of Mr. Elton, of Jane Fairfax, of Frank Churchill, of Mr. Knightley and of herself lead her to develop and encourage a number of situations which are carefully worked out by the novelist so as to display the profound contradictions which are the essence of irony. Emma is shown to be the victim of a series of illusions and her disillusionment in each case leaves her a little wise than before. Her greatest disillusionment comes at the end when the humble protegee whom she has been encouraging to raise her thoughts to her social superior (by whom she meant Frank Churchill) confesses that she has devoted her thoughts to Mr. Knightley. With the speed of an arrow the truth darts through her that she is in love with Mr. Knightley and that no one but herself should marry him. Jane Austen's consummate art is revealed in the working out of Emma's blunders and disillusionments which ultimately result in self-knowledge. Here we have a Comedy of Errors arising so naturally from the nimble impressions of a lively mind. Miss Woodhouse though not actually lacking in sense, was one who hardly used it. Hence her days were spent in a series of emotional mistakes, frequently planned for her friend. Her ideas were no sooner formed than acted upon. All these seem real as seen through Emma's eyes and all is touched with a light hand so that we can smile over her discomfiture and her repentance. The genuine emotions of every mood have been so managed that we recognize their sincerity without sharing their effects. As one tangle of misunderstanding succeeds another and every new scheme or guess of Emma's goes wrong, the six characters ultimately involved are so simply sorted into their correct

position that we cannot help admiring the art by which the goal of each had been so carefully hid.

Like the greatest of her predecessors in the art of fiction Jane Austen was always concerned with composing a straightforward love-story inspired by generous affection for idividual human-beings and passionate hatred of all meanness and hypocrisy. She combined with her natural humour and with a great respect for style and keen, critical judgment of artistry and technique in the expression of genius. This has invested her characters with truthfulness to life and given immortality to her inventions.

Chapter X

JANE AUSTEN'S STYLE

"Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style" according to Dr. Johnson, Jane Austen has her own preferences and opinions as to proper words in proper places as revealed in her letters and as implied in all her literairy satire. Her ideas on the subject are also implied in the diosyncracies of speech and letter-writing which characterise her disagreeable people. Direct satire of current abuses of language she leaves to her clever young men like Mr. Palmer and Henry Tilney whom the author evidently considered "more nice than wise." Further information on Jane Austen's ideas of style can be gathered from the fragments of the manuscripts of her works which have been preserved. A comparison of the corrections made in these manuscripts with the final version shows us Jane Austen at work, arranging and rearranging words and phrases till her ideal of "proper words in proper places" was realised. The preferences which a study of her manuscripts reveal tally with those expressed in her letters to Anna, while the dislikes which emerge from the study tally with her choice of the faults ridiculed in her burlesques and satires.

From a study of her novels and the letters which have been preserved we find that the characteristics of Jane Austen's style are consistent one with another and with the opinions she expresses. The brilliance and sparkle of her style in her earlist letters and edge which exact phrasing gives to her satire in *Sense and Sensibility* have blinded some critics like Mr. Garrod to the gradual and steady development of her stylistic powers. Mr. Garrod's declaration that "Jane Austen could write at twenty as well, or better, or very nearly as well, as at forty" misses essential qualities in her later style.

Jane Austen's earliest published work, *Sense and Sensibility*, bears signs of apprenticeship. The playfulness and epigrammatic brilliance, characteristic of the much-admired *Pride and Prejudice* though charming in itself, had its limitations. The young novelist had yet to learn to command a variety of tones to suit different kinds of narrative and the sustained course of grave, circumstantial relation of events. The style which was admirably suited for the description of Mr. Bennet's married life in the passage, "To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness that a man would in general wish to owe to his wife; but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will derive benefit from such as are given," was not so well-suited for describing the prospect of Lydia's married life since the antithesis in the latter descriptions is too jingling.

In dialogue also Jane Austen has much to learn in spite of the witty invention that delights us in the dialogues of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* and in spite of the quickness of ear which so early caught more than one tone in the talk of fools. She has yet to learn the tones expressive of varied moods and the undertones of anxiety, sense of loss or unreserved happiness. Also she has to get command over the talk of plain, sensible people. She feels safer as long as she lets the spirit of comedy govern the language of her characters. Only by the time she comes to write *Emma*, Jane Austen can get perfect command over the talk of such serious persons as Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley. There is just the gentlest twinkle of humour on Mr. Weston's side and no more than habitual irony on Mr. Knightley's. Jane Austen's later command of variety of tones in narrative and dialogue is well-illustrated by the two scenes at the White Hart hotel in the rewritten part of *Persuasion*. Here there is straight-forward narration, plain and level, but never spiritless, and the several tones of the talkers, from Charles' broad good humour to Mrs. Croft's cool sense, and from Mrs. Musgrove's easy absurdity

to the highly charged mood of Anne and Captain Harville, are distinguished from one another.

Jane Austen's development of her style can be traced by a study of the way she tells her story, mostly through the talk of her characters, including the grave and the gay, the wise and the foolish. Even a character of such marked idiosyncrasies of speech as Miss Bates is made use of by Miss Austen to convey to us the exact circumstances at more than one crisis in her niece's fortunes, without using any mode of expression in consistent with her usual speech. Miss Bates's speech while creating an impression of confusion by her refusing to end her sentences and making each sentence to fly off at a tangent from the last, can still make her ideas clear to us. It is only characterised by a limpid confusion as the idiosyncrasies of speech are modelled in low relief. The use of fragmentary speech which in other characters suggests strong feeling or embarrassment is used to suggest the habitual mode of expression in Miss Bates. This is the unemphatic treatment of idiosyncrasy which may be called low relief. This same shallow modelling can be discerned in all Jane Austen's dialogue. Social variants in speech are suggested by syntax and phrasing rather than by vocabulary as in the case of the speech of the Thorpes and the Tilneys. The exact keeping of scale in this makes the vulgarism of Lucy Steele to be distinguished from that of a Thorpe. "Each social shalf in her little world has its own slang," says Lascalles. Jane Austen is able to attain this mastery of dialogue because of her having a fine and true ear. According to Chapman, "she is one of the greatest, because one of the most accurate writers of dialogue of her own or any age." Even Garrod considers her dialogue truthful and apt. It is evident that she was an alert observer of mannerism in speech and knew how to introduce it in dialogue without wearying us by iteration. She remembers faithfully and selects shrewdly individual idiosyncrasies in her characters and uses them with capital effect.

This style with its quick and light response to idiosyncrasy makes Jane Austen's characters to be so

communicative. Few novelists could be more exact than Jane Austen in the phrasing of the thoughts of her characters, whether in the form of dialogue, letter, or reflection. The slight increase of formality in the men's letters sharpens the point of Mr. Bennet's wit, lends weight to Darcy's assertions and elaborates Frank Churchill's compliments. The women's letters cannot be mistaken for dialogues, as they catch and hold different moods as speech can rarely do.

The virtue of the style used in Jane Austen's dialogues is that it achieves harmony with her narrative manner. Each character is made to use a language of his own while telling us what the novelist means that he or she should. The chameleon-like quality of her narrative style makes it to vary in colour as the habits of expression of the several characters impress themselves on the relation of the episodes in which they are involved and on the description of their situations. This is illustrated by the description of the arrival of the Bertrams in the midst of the solemn grandeur of Sotherton. This chameleon-like quality is a symptom of the pliability of Jane Austen's style, arising from the essential simplicity of staple. She was brought up on the standard authors of her own and the preceding age, including the best essayists, historians, and novelists. Their habits of thought and expression, especially those of Dr. Johnson and the essayists and historians become hers whenever she wants it to be so. The essayists of the eighteenth century had been kindly masters to Jane Austen and the turn of wit, the phrasing of their lighter moods, had come easily to her. What she learned from these masters she transmuted to her own use and many of her passages might come from one of the periodical essays. Character and motive, is presented by Jane Austen in a style reminding us of the style of the "Lives of the Poets." Not only the style of Johnson, but also the tones of his voice seem to be echoed in her pages. Her aptitude for coining pregnant abstractions like Miss Bates's 'desultory goodwill' and Mrs. Elton's "apparatus of happiness" recalls Johnson's phrases. From Johnson she must have learned

her use of antithesis, imparting to the style a formality quite congenial to English idiom. Any close observer of Jane Austen's style can see that she is shy of figurative language in general especially in her gravest passages. The use of stale, unmeaning figures of speech is made a common mark of insincerity in her disagreeable people. Mrs. Elton is seen embellishing her language with the borrowed plume of poetic image as when she speaks of "Hymen's saffron robe" being put on for her and Elton. Again in the case of Mrs. Norris, metaphor is made a screen for the meaninglessness of her generous words. It is not merely the idle figurative expressions, nor the slang, with its uneasy pretentions, nor the wilful use of concrete and particular expression where there is no occasion for them, which disgusts us in the speech of Mrs. Elton. It is the abuse of language in the interests of an ugly smartness which creates in us the unpleasant sensation of seeing a tool misused. Jane Austen's sharpest critical satire is often aimed at what may be called the 'novel slang' used by the contemporary novelists.

One very important quality of Jane Austen's style is her splendid use of irony as a stylistic technique of reversal or transformation of literal meaning to expose the laughable qualities of a character or to underline a decided judgment. For example, she wholly condemns the Rev. William Collins whose orotund letters are meant to be read with an eye to the unconscious ridicule which they contain. Again we see how Marianne Dashwood is both the target of her comedy and the subject of her irony when Jane Austen says that she "was reasonable enough to allow that a man of five and thirty might well have outlived all acuteness of feeling and *every* exquisite power of enjoyment. She was perfectly disposed to make *every* allowance for the colonel's advanced state of life which humanity required." Though at first reading opinions seem to be those of the author, we can immediately realise the irony from the words, "reasonable all, advanced state of life," used here. Understatement is often made use of to emphasise the irony of a passage as in the description of Mrs. Jennings in *Sense and Sensibility*.

"Mrs. Jennings was a widow with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world.'' The irony is contained in the last phrase which gives us an idea of the triviality of Mrs. Jenning's existence Jane Austen's stylistic use of understatement deepens as she moves from the early novels to the complexities of *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. She writes of the two Miss Bertrams : "It is not very wonderful that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity and humility." The irony here is unmistakable. In *Emma*, we come across the following passage about the heroine after her accepting Mr. Knightley : "It is *remarkable* that Emma, in the many, very many, points of view in which she was now beginning to consider Downwell Abbey, was never struck with any sense of injury to her nephew Henry whose rights as heir expectant had formerly been so tenaciously regarded.'' The novelist, in using the word remarkable here is amusingly reminding us of the distance that her heroine has already gone towards knowing herself. There is again splendid irony in the way in which Jane Austen emphasises the human contradiction between sympathy and concern with petty matters as she refers to the death of Mrs. Churchill. "It was felt as such things must be felt. Everybody had a degree of gravity and sorrow ; tenderness towards the departed, solicitude for the surviving friends ; and in a reasonable time, curiosity to know where she would be buried.

On the whole one can say that Jane Austen's irony, so far as style is concerned, is much more pervasive than the usual rhetorical categories will allow. Along with the irony brought out by character and incident, this irony expressed in her style of writing is partly responsible for her abiding charm.

With delicate precision which is the result of perfect control over the tools chosen and certainty as to the results

aimed at, Jane Austen arranges and rearranges her words and phrases to her liking so that everyone of them remains exquisitely whole, like a falling drop of water and is in its right place. As an artist she could not do anything slovenly and we could aptly bestow on her the compliment paid by Richards on to Ladv Brad Shaigh : "The pen is almost as pretty, an implement in a woman's fingers as a needle." Bailey paid the most fitting tribute to her excellent style when he wrote : "She wrote well, because she could write well and liked it, and all the better because she did not know how well she wrote."

Chapter XI

JANE AUSTEN'S WOMEN-CHARACTERS

WHY ARE THEY ALWAYS AT THE CENTRE OF THE NOVELS—THEIR POWER AND THEIR DILEMMA—WHAT COMMENT DOES THIS FACT MAKE ON THE ART OF AUSTEN (HOW IT IS LINKED WITH THE THEME ?)

Though the novel has won so many triumphs and unfolded so many rare experiences and mighty passions since Jane Austen's time, readers still find pleasure in the familiar little world of her novels because of the abiding charm of her characterisation, particularly in regard to her women. It is almost universally admitted that she does not succeed so well in the delineation of her men as in the portrayal of her women. According to Bernard Groom the only man who is wholly at home in her world is Mr. Woodhouse, the valetudinarian of weak nerves who would not recommend an egg boiled by anybody other than his own cook.

For most women of the upper middle class, the little world of social relationships was, a century ago, that in which they "found their happiness or not at all." Jane Austen who belonged to this class and found the delight of her life in these social relationships has succeeded in giving us a very exact and realistic portrayal of the women to whom dancing, visiting and attending balls and parties were the most important things in their social life. Into the portraits of her heroine, Jane Austen has put her best art, subtly differentiating one from another. The minor figures grouped round them—the fools, flirts and worldlings, are equally distinct and individualised. Mrs. Bennet, Miss Bates, Mrs. Norris and Lady Bertram live in

our memory as much as Elizabeth Bennet, Fanny Price, Emma Woodhouse or Anne Elliot. The portraits of all these women are exact and minute and each of them is characterised by her own vocabulary, mode of thought and turn of phrase. In her delightful transcripts of real life, as it was lived by the gentry in rural England we come across a whole gallery of women-characters in the round who can be looked at and studied from all angles. In addition to these who form the majority there are a few flat characters who represent certain humours in the old sense of the word. But even these flat characters in Jane Austen are extremely entertaining because they are mainly comic. We are as much interested in a beloved bore like Miss Bates as we are interested in any well-rounded character in the novels.

Jane's own affections centred in her young people, and especially, of course, in her heroines and that is the reason why they are always at the centre of the novels. About Elizabeth Bennet, she wrote: "I must confess that I think her (Elizabeth) as delightful a creature as ever appeared" This is true also of the heroines of the other novels who are not in any way unusual or remarkable characters, except that we like them enough to make their names household words. Though they were born in George, the Third's reign, we seem to know them so well, since their simple virtues, the charm of their youth and good looks and happy natures, are matters of everyday experience. The power which makes them live is Jane Austen's rare talent for describing the involvements and feelings of ordinary life. Only imaginative sympathy with the characters she created could enable Jane Austen to make ordinary commonplace things interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment. Being a woman of great vitality, generous impulses and large-hearted charity, gifted with a power of intuitive sympathy, Jane Austen prized the frank, the open-hearted the eager character beyond all others. Warmth and enthusiasm captivated Jane Austen and she felt she could depend more on the sincerity of those who said or looked a rash or hasty thing than of those whose presence of mind never left them. Her heroine Emma exclaims.

"There is no charm equal to tenderness of heart." This is a quality commonly shared by all her heroines.

Marianne Dashwood and Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* may be considered as twin heroines, each embodying a mode of existence which is desirable, but each of which contradicts the other. We are shown how in the course of the story Marianne gradually acquires more sense and Elinor more sensibility. In Catherine Morland, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey* we have another very delightful creature. Jane Austen speaks about her in the following manner: "Her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affection of any kind, her manners just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl; her person pleasing, and when in good looks, pretty, and her mind about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is." Youth, beauty and natural credulousness make her a very lovable heroine. Far more lovable and attractive is the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*. She is an attractive, intelligent, high-spirited and self-respecting girl whose prejudice against the proud hero, Darcy, and the supplanting of that prejudice by a deep and sincere love is the theme of this novel. Elizabeth's blind prejudice against Darcy is gradually removed and in the process, her self-revelation is gradually brought about. Of all the children of Jane Austen's imagination, Elizabeth is the cleverest, wittiest, and liveliest, and she is the one most like her author. More than one generation of readers has felt just as Jane herself had felt towards Elizabeth. They have found no one so delightful and are not inclined to tolerate those who do not like her. Coming to *Mansfield Park*, we find ourselves presented with a heroine. Fanny Price, who appears exasperatingly meek, and modest by modern standards. The modesty of Fanny is the key to the book and it is a fine and true stroke to make her think that Crawford's proposal is nothing but a joke. We see more of Fanny's heart than we do of any other of Jane Austen's characters except Anne Elliot. Anne completes and improves the character we have in Fanny Price just as Elizabeth completes and improves Elinor. We get the impression that

Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse are the sort of young women who can take care of themselves, but Fanny Price and Anne Elliot are the sort of girls who become the victims of men and fortune. Hence, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot appeal less to our heads, but more to our hearts. Emma Woodhouse is unique among Jane Austen's heroines in one respect. She learns and changes and grows in the course of the story. At the beginning of the novel she is vain and self-conceited and proud of her ability to see into the hearts of other people and delights in ordering their lives. But bitter experience opens her eyes to her own limitations and she becomes humbled and chastened at the end. Emma is more completely the centre of interest in the novel than Elinor or Elizabeth, though not more than Fanny or Anne. All that is best in the book depends on the character of Emma who is alive and convincing from first to last. She is true to life "in her selfishness and in her goodness, in her commonsense and in her folly, in the social and personal vanity which is always leading her into disasters and in the soundness both of heart and mind which is always there to get her ultimately out of them." She is "a delightfnl creation and the all important pivot on which a delightful book turns." But she does not captivate one's heart as Anne Elliot does or run away with one's heart and head as Elizabeth does. According to Bailey, "There are few heriones in fiction whom we love so much, feel for so much, as we love and feel for Anne Elliot." Though we are interested in the love affairs of Elizabeth and Emma, our hearts are not stirred for them as they are for Anne. It seems that Jane Austen had a great tenderness of feeling for this lovely and latest-born of her heroines and has communicated some of it to her readers.

Speaking about these heroines of Jane Austen, in general, the first thing that we have to admit is that they are very well distinguished from one another. Certain qualities like a keen intelligence, liveliness of disposition or brilliance and wit may be repeated in one or two of them. But we cannot, on any account, accuse Jane Austen of giving us the same character in differnt costumes or conditions of life. Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet and

Emma Woodhouse share the intelligence, liveliness and wit which must have been the characteristics of their creator. But apart from these qualities they have nothing in common. Each of her heroines is attractive and lovable in her own individual way and can be immediately distinguished from her sisters of the other novels. All the novels depend primarily on their heroines because it is in their fortunes that Jane Austen is most interested.

Jane Austen's portraits of the minor or subordinate women-characters is equally memorable and true to life as those of her heroines. They include such silly women as Mrs. Bennet, such beloved bores as Miss Bates, such vulgarians as Mrs. Elton and such odious characters as Mrs. Norris. One of the most memorable characters belonging to this class is Mrs. Bennet, the unbelievably silly mother of the brilliant and witty Elizabeth. It is interesting to note what Bailey has to say about the attractiveness of Jane Austen's portrayal of this character and its truth to life. He says : "When we read *Pride and Perjudice,* we do not ask ourselves......whether any wife and mother was ever so entirely absorbed in being ridiculous as Mrs. Bennet. She never once speaks but to expose her own folly. But, though it would be hard to discover in life a woman who never says a sensible thing, yet the magic of art knows how to make Mrs. Bennet alive and convincing from her first word to her last. That is the secret. Art is not art if it is not surprising : it is not great art if it is not true. We are surprised at the silliness of Mrs. Bennet, at the wit and sense of Elizabeth. And they are, of course, each a concentration and intensification transcending any individual whom we have ever known. But as we read the book for the second, or fifth, or fiftieth time our surprise is more and more absorbed, as it was in the case of Hamlet, in recognition that, as Hamlet's heights and depths turned strangely out to be our own, so too, Mrs. Bennet's silliness is our silliness, and Elizabeth's sense our sense. The surprise never ceases altogether ; if it did, too much of the delight would go with it ; but at each reading the surprise, which began by asking whether such things could be true, comes

more and more to ask only how so much of truth can be known and uttered with such certainty and force. And, if we have laughed at Mrs. Bennet with some aloofness and superiority all through the book, don't we at the end recognize that the last and silliest of all her outbursts is the one in which, if we will but confess it, we most see ourselves ?

Miss Bates in *Emma*, is a character whom R. W. Chapman calls truly Shakespearean. She is a character one cannot help laughing at and on her own plane, she is comparable with Sir John Falstaff himself. Though she is not witty, she can easily be the cause of wit in others. Bailey says about her : "Miss Bates is incomparable ! among all the attempts to put incessant and inconsequent garrulity upon the stage of the novel, this one of Jane Austen stands out alone in solitary certainty of success. Miss Bates's chatter is so life-like that those who know nothing about the art of creation might suppose it to have been taken down by a shorthand writer. But those who have ever made any humblest attempt at art or letters know what an immeasurable gulf lies between the result of shorthand or photography and such a miracle of creation as this. In Mrs. Elton who resembles Lady Catherine in insolence and snobbery we have a character whom we hate and despise and also laugh at when she begins boasting about her brother-in-law's barouche-landau and of "people who have extensive grounds." Inspite of all her insolence and snobbery she is more despicable and comic than odious. In Mrs. Norris we have a character who is truly odious. Speaking about her we have to admit that Jane Austen had searched her conscience and had dealt even handed justice to the worst of her characters. After showing us all the odious traits in Mr. Norris' character the novelist is careful to point out in the last quarter of the novel the only good thing that could be said about her. It is that with such a nature as hers, she would have been better able to cope with the unfortunate situation in which fate had placed her sister Mrs. Price. By this remark Jane Austen saves the character of Mrs. Norris from total inhumanity.

Reading through Jane Austen's novels we cannot but admire the range and variety of her portraits of women-characters. Though the society in which she moved, was restricted to the upper middle class in rural England, she was able to observe among the members of her own social class all the variations of ordinary feminine character which have appealed to readers through the ages because of this essential humanity. Among the fools, flirts and worldings of Jane Austen's novels, are the different categories of women such as we meet with in our daily life, all the daughters of Eve under their different costumes and in their different attitudes. The most important business of their lives in that of getting married and towards that end all their efforts are directed. Most young women of Jane Austen's time had powerful inducements to marry. If they did not marry in time they would end up as pitiable old maids, with no one to provide them the security and happiness of a home and the joy of having children of one's own to look after. All Jane Austen's women seem to realise the necessity of marrying young and marrying well, as far as possible.

Jane Austen's women, particularly her heroines were so dear to her that it is said she used to look for their portraits whenever she went to Art Exhibitions or picture-galleries. How real they were to her contemporaries is evident from the fact that many of them saw in their friends and acquaintances the prototypes of these characters. A Miss Dusantoy, had a great idea of being Fanny Price while a Miss Merries was convinced that the novelist had meant Mrs. and Miss Bates for some acquaintance of hers. But Jane declared that though she thought it quite fair to note peculiarities and weaknesses, it was her desire to create, not to reproduce characters from real life. There is always a woman-character placed at the centre of Jane Austen's novels and made to function as an anxious spectator and judge of all that is going on around her. About these women at the centre of her novels Baker has made the following observation : "In every novel there is a family, like or unlike the Austen's ; and in every novel, one female

character in whom it is not too fanciful to recognize an impersonation of the demure observer, in the corner of the room, ticking off instances and oddities and forming judgments and conjectures. Being players themselves, with a great deal at stake, these anxious spectators do not see the whole of the game ; but they see more than the other players ; they read, mark, learn, for their own benefit ; sometimes they also teach. In *Sense and Sensibility*, this is Elinor's part. She is not a sprightly and humorous creature, and not much like Jane Austen, except in her good sense and clear insight. She is much more like the sensible but reserved Cassandra. This sedate lady has finished her education, and looks at the weaknesses and errors of her fellow-beings with regretful forbearance, and with a tender solicitude for those who are her nearest and dearest. Elizabeth Bennet, in the next novel and Anne Elliot, in the last, who are the closest likenesses in character to Jane Austen herself, seem to have least of this particular duty allotted to them. They are in such ticklish situations themselves that their part as critical observers is not so much to the fore. But none is a better mouthpiece of Jane Austen's caustic reflections than Elizabeth ; and in Anne she lays bare more of her heart and lets out more of her inmost thoughts than she permitted herself elsewhere, even in the characters she loved best. Fanny Price, in *Mansfield Park*, is a different type, but as a simple young thing watching intently and learning to fit herself into a society, entirely new and strange, she has a similar function. Catherine Morland, in *Northanger Abbey*, is another neophyte, bewildered by her first experiences, who is taught sense by a series of misadventures and disillusionments. As a girl making her debut, she is obviously like Fanny Burney's Evelina, the ingenuous diarist. Emma Woodhouse in the novel called by her first name, with mental powers not inferior to Elizabeth Bennet's, has to be schooled by an arducous course of blunders and humiliations, due to misconceptions of what is going on under her eyes. Only after many reverses and some bitter pangs do these characters attain to anything like the novelist's omniscience. The reader sees far more than they can, and is invited to smile at their

aberrations. But they are placed at the centre, they are obliged by their situation to be watchful and critical. The story in each case shows them assimilating experience, acquiring tact and judgment, and adjusting themselves with more or less pain and difficulty to their circumstances and obligations and it is largely through their eyes that the story in all its bearings grows clear to the reader.'' Being placed at the centre of the novel in each case, these characters have to be watchful and critical of the others. But this is by no means easy when, instead of being impartial spectators, they are also actors in the drama. But though they are not able to see the whole of the game, they see much more than the other players and they read, mark and learn for their own benefit and sometimes they also teach. Herein lies their great power. Their dilemma consists in their having to play the part of a spectator of the game as well as that of an active participant, at the same time. Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot are in such ticklish situations themselves that they cannot always assume the role of impartial observers. But Elizabeth is often made to express Jane Austen's own satiric reflections or critical comments on characters and situations while through Anne Elliot she lets us see most into her heart and in-most thoughts. These central characters are made to serve as critical commentators, not only on the other characters, but also on the theme of the novels concerned.

Chapter XII

JANE AUSTEN AS A NOVELIST OF MANNERS

Jane Austen's novels are characterised by an exquisite perfection which is the result of her being content to work in the limited field which she knew best. There is in English fiction no better delineation of the life of the smaller English gentry, enslaved by convention and unaffected by what happened in the outside world, than we have in her novels. In painting of her pictures of domestic life as it was lived by the society to which she belonged, she invariably chose three or four families in a country-village as the ideal thing to work on. A village like Highbury or a country-house like Mansfield Park formed the centre of her novel because that was what she knew and loved best. Against the background so familiar to her she set the creatures of her imagination, making them behave according to the accepted standards of her class and society. Though Jane Austen deliberately ignored the major historical events of her time and refused to make any references, either to the French Revolution or the Industrial Revolution, the reality of the world she has portrayed for us is by no means lessened by it. To quote what Walter Allen has observed about Jane Austen's world in his work, *The English Novel*: "There is a whole larger world outside it of which she says nothing, but that does not invalidate the world she had made."

The self-contained and narrow world which Jane Austen has created for us is quite true to the one in which her own uneventful life was passed. Even within her restricted world she excludes all that falls outside the boundaries of a woman's experience. She never attempted to crowd her novels with the kind of characters that Fielding and

Smollett and Scott created with their wider knowledge of male society. In Jane Austen we hardly ever have a conversation entirely among men, without any female audience. The reason for this is that the novelist could not trust herself to write truthfully and convincingly of the talk and behaviour of men in an exclusively male society which was unknown to her.

But in depicting realistically the life and manners of the world of men and women she knew intimately, Jane Austen has no rival. "The rectory, the country mansion, the small town, the professional circle, with rare sallies to Bath or Portsmouth or Lyme" are more truthfully portrayed in her novels. She has such sureness of artistic insight and power of selection that while introducing us to her narrow world she makes us forget that there is any other world outside it. Judged by modern standards Jane Austen's world is enslaved by convention. Its very elaborate and subtle class-structure and extremely rigid code of behaviour are realistically, though ironically, portrayed by Jane Austen. Mr. Darcy and Miss Woodhouse are painfully conscious of what people in their situation are expected to do or say on each occasion. Though possessed of innate goodness of heart and truly democratic feelings of sympathy with what is good and noble in any human-being neither Darcy nor Emma wants to mingle freely with their social inferiors. Emma, for instance, could not think of mixing freely with the Martins (Robert Martin being only a gentleman farmer) and the Coles who were well-to-do but not gentle enough. But on the occasion of attending the Coles' party, her feminine instinct or gregariousness at last overcomes her artistocratic scruples. It is characteristic of Miss Austen's art that she always makes her characters conform to the rigid code of behaviour fixed by their society, however unreasonable it may seem to our modern standards. For example, we find that the conventions of their society made it wrong for the young Bertrams to perform a play when their father was away from home. By keeping strictly to the established code of behaviour for her characters, she makes them and the society they belong to, all the more real to us.

In a novel of Jane Austen, we observe the very artistic selection of events and characters from the author's own personal experience and the combining of them in the crucible of her imagination so as to produce a veritable comedy of manners. Her art is nearer to that of Congreve or Moliere than that of either Fanny Burney or Maria Edgeworth. Both of them were admirable character-mongers who successfully contrived plots and scenes to depict individual idiosyncrasies, but their excursions into the field of the comedy of manners were comparatively fewer than those of Jane Austen. Her genius was truly dramatic in the sense that character and action can never be separated in her novels, the latter being always dependent on the former. She has in all her novels, many scenes which are fraught with dramatic irony and characterised by the most brilliant and pointed dialogue, as well as many surprising moments which remind us the art of the theatre and often rival it. As she wrote in *Mansfield Park*, she left other pens to dwell on guilt and misery, turning away from such odious subjects as quickly as she could. But in every novel of hers there is much of the comedy of manners. At the end of the highly dramatic action, all pretences and delusions are stripped away, all humbug and folly is properly exposed or punished and the rights of truth and good sense are firmly established. During the action of the novel the various characters are tried and tested and are duly rewarded with happiness or dismissed with ignominy. By the end of the story the characters have learned to see themselves as they are and are also changed by what they have gone through. Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, and Anne Elliot are all changed and chastened by the time we come to the end of the comedy of manners in which the foibles and weaknesses of each are mirthfully exposed.

All the six great novels of Jane Austen can be considered as comedies in which she has exposed all the weaknesses and vanities and little snobberies that characterised social life of her contemporaries. Referring to her view of society, Margaret Kennedy points out how, very early in life, Jane Austen had made three important discoveries which are all clearly indicated in her novels. The

first of these was that the manners and the culture to which she had been accustomed in her own family circle, was by no means shared by all her fellowmen. The second was that among those who considered themselves her social superiors and dwelt in large country-mansions aud owned vast lands and estates, much lower standards of manners and culture may be observed. The third discovery of Jane Austen was that these powerful landowners were evidently ignorant of their own shortcomings and lack of true refinement and considered themselves socially and culturally superior to other people. According to their false ideas of gentility, a man who had to work for his living was inferior to one who could afford to waste his time in idleness. They naturally assumed a patronising and condescending air to a clergyman and Jane Austen, who was the daughter of the Rector at Steventon, formed a strong prejudice against them very early in her life, though she had, in later life, come across some people who were truly genteel and deserved her admiration and respect. Jane Austen's early prejudice against the class was responsible for the pride with which she has characterised Pemberley and the unpleasant and snobbish qualities she has associated with Rosings, Mansfield, Sotherton, Uppercross and Kelynch and even Harsfield. Only in Mr. Knightley of Denwell Abbey and Colonel Brandon we have two blameless and truly admirable characters belonging to the social class which Jane Austen habitually criticises and holds up to ridicule.

It is not right to say that as a novelist of manners, Jane Austen was bent upon attacking the privileged classes, because she used her lash against big and small alike. The creator of the self-important Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the avaricious General Tilney, the Oafish Lord Osborne, and the insipid Lady Darleyimple, and Miss Carteret was also the creator of the Steeles and the Thorpes and Mr. Collins and the Eltons and Mrs. Clay Kery. Meanness, selfishness, vanity and lack of proper judgment are shown to be, by no means, the monopoly of the privileged classes. On the other hand meanness, avarice and vulgarity of the lower classes are made use of by the novelist to set off the false

standards and lack of judgment shown by those who consider themselves their betters. Lucy Steele easily succeeds in imposing upon Barton and on the family of the Ferrars while General Tilney foolishly gossips with John Tholpe and the designing Mrs. Clay Kery almost hooks Sir Walter Elliot. The vulgarity of Mrs. Elton combined with her snobbishness and ostentation make her truly insufferable.

Jane Austen was endowed by nature, with all the requisite qualifications for becoming a successful novelist of manners. She had a fine sense of humour, a ready wit, and keen powers of observation combined with a turn for satire and a keen sense of the ridiculous inhuman character and behaviour. Even from childhood she was characterised by the ambition to become a character-monger like Fanny Burney, but unlike Fanny Burney she was no respecter of the great. Her creative faculties were made use of in evolving satirical but lively portraits of both upper class and lower class people. Her attitude to these creatures of her imagination is that of the writer of comedy who is kindly to man while holding him up to ridicule and laughing at his foibles. As a novelist of manners, Jane Austen laughs good-humouredly at the weaknesses, vanities and foibles of her men and women. She mirthfully points out how even the cleverest of them are often labouring under the most foolish delusions and are very slow in attaining to true self-knowledge through humiliating or painful experiences. It is evident that the creator of Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot knew so much about the workings of the human heart and found great pleasure in the human scene around her which she has attempted to portray and immortalise in her novels.

Chapter XIII

JANE AUSTEN AS A MORALIST

It is possible to interpret the novels of Jane Austen on three levels of meaning. First of all they can be considered as social history, illustrative of country-life among the upper middle classes in southern England at the end of the eighteenth century. Secondly, they can be considered as didactic treatise in which sense, sensibility, pride, prejudice and many other human virtues and defects are set forth in narrative form and commented on. Thirdly, it is possible to consider the novels on the ironic level where the various situations, characters and incidents are regarded as implying something more than what they embody. It is necessary to study the novels on all three levels to have a proper idea of their greatness and value.

Considering the novels on the didactic level, we find that Jane Austen's first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility* is an instructive treatise on the desirability of sense and the dangers of excessive sensibility, as seen from the characters and fortunes of two sisters, Marianne Dashwood and Elinor Dashwood. Marianne's "burning human heart" leads to heart-break, disillusionment, and misery till she attains sense enough to marry the elderly and colourless Colonel Brandon on prudential considerations. Her sister Elinor, on the other hand, is characterised by intelligence and self-control and these, though powerless to keep her from misery and ill-fortune, at least enable her to bear her fate calmly. She is rewarded by a marriage of love to a worthy young clergyman. Thus the story may be read as a vindication of Sense and a comic treatment of Sensibility.

Northanger Abbey tells the story of an ordinary, prosaic girl, Catherine Morland, whose romantic illusions are

shattered by her first contact with reality. The book shows us how she awakens from her Gothic dream to realise that the world is more sensible than she has never believed it to be. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel which displays and illustrates the dangers of excessive Pride and over-weening prejudice. The hero and heroine, though eminently worthy of each other, are not able to come together because of Pride on one side and Prejudice or the other. In *Mansfield Park* we find that the story is all too didactic. It has even been called a treatise on education. Dr. Chapman says about this novel : "The ostensible moral of the book, which is almost blatantly didactic, is that education, religious and moral, is omnipotent over character. It is true that this theory is oftenest voiced by the more priggish of the persons —solemn Sir Thomas, his virtuous son, and his pensive niece. But it is plainly endorsed by their author, who was perhaps at this time too much under the influence of one of her favourite divines or secular moralists." As a novel of instruction, *Emma* deals with the faults of the heroine who is always wrong and always believes herself to be right. It is a kind of drawing-room comedy of self-deception. Emma in course of time gains self-knowledge and has an insight into one of her major failings. "With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of everybody's feelings ; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange everybody's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken ; and she had quite done nothing, for she had done mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and she too much feared, on Mr. Knightley."

Now that the scales have fallen from her eyes, she realises that there is no charm equal to tenderness of heart. In words which have the ring of truth she says : "Warmth and tenderness of heart, with an affectionate, open manner, will beat all the clearness of head in the world, for attraction. I am sure it will. It is tenderness of heart which makes my dear father so generally beloved, which gives Isabella all her popularity. I have it not, but I know how to prize and respect it. Harriet is my superior in all the charm and all the felicity it gives. Dear Harriet ! I would

not change you for the clearest headed longest-sighted, best judging female breathing. Oh! the coldness of a Jane Fairfax! Harriet is worth a hundred such. And for a wife, a sensible man's wife, it is invaluable. I mention no names; but happy the man who changes Emma for Harriet!" Here we almost seem to hear the voice of Jane Austen and have some idea of her sense of moral values. Besides tenderness of heart there is another virtue which Jane Austen wants us to admire. In the closing part of the book, after becoming safely engaged to Emma, Mr. Knightley feelingly asks: "My Emma, does not everything prove the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealing with each other?" This is the essence of the moral lesson contained in the story of Jane Fairfax and her secret engagement.

In *Persuasion*, her most sentimental book, Jane Austen expresses her Johnsonian contempt for false sentiment, through her remarks about "Mrs. Musgrove's large fat sighings over the destiny of a son whom alive nobody had cared for; the very troublesome, hopeless son whom the Musgroves had the ill-fortune to have born to them, and the good fortune to lose before his twentieth year." The truth being Jane Austen's business, she is as fond in her pleasant way, as Mr. Hardy in his grim, sardonic way, of expressing life's ironies. In this novel, her one romance, she wants to emphasize that duty is duty and that no high-flown talk about sentiment and passion can turn right into wrong or wrong into right. Even in this last completed novel of hers, we find her justifying sense against sensibility. She makes Anne Elliot at the very end of the story, look back and say that however much Lady Russell had been mistaken in giving her the advice which had caused her years of loneliness and misery she did not regret having followed it. If she had done otherwise she should certainly have suffered in her conscience. Thus we see that in *Persuasion*, Prudence and love are in conflict as indeed they are in *Pride and Prejudice* when Charlotte makes her purely prudential match with Mr. Collins. Jane Austen warmly defends both love and prudence and shows that neither can be indulged without some sacrifice of the other.

Referring to Jane Austen's qualities as a moralist, Bradley makes the following observations : "There are two distinct strains in Jane Austen. She is a moralist and a humorist. These strains are often blended or even completely fused but still they may be distinguished. It is the first that connects her with Johnson, by whom, I suspect she was a good deal influenced. With an intellect much less massive, she still observes human nature with the same penetration and the same complete honesty. She is like him in the abstention—no doubt, in her case, much less deliberate—from speculation and in the orthodoxy and strength of her religion. She is very like him in her contempt for mere sentiment and for that 'cant' of which Boswell was recommended to clear his mind. We remember Johnson in those passages where she refuses to express a deeper concern than she feels for misfortune or grief, and with both there is an occasional touch of brutality in the manner of the refusal. It is a question, however, of manner alone, and when she speaks for Johnson too ; as when she makes Emma say : "I hope it may be allowed that if compassion has produced exertion and relief to the sufferers, it has done all that is truly important. Finally, like Johnson, she is in the strict sense, moralist, Her morality, that is to say, is not merely embodied in her plots ; it is often openly expressed. She followed a fashion of the day in abstract titles, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion :* but the fashion coincided with the movement in her mind, and she knew very well the main lesson to be drawn from the other three novels. Her explicit statements and comments are often well worth pondering "though their terminology is sometimes old-fashioned and though her novels contain infinitely more wisdom than they formulate."

About Jane Austen as a moralist Lord David Cecil makes some very valuable remarks. He points out how her novels express a view of life which may be termed the moral-realistic view. She was of the opinion that as one lived only to be good, it was the duty of everyone to be

sincere, unselfish and disinterested. But the very seriousness of her belief in good principles of conduct makes her to be realistic in her view of life. She despised all ideals which were impracticable. She did not care for the most soul-stirring emotions if they did not work for the benefit of mankind. She had no regard for emotions as such. The emotion of love itself did not rouse her enthusiasm, unless it was justified by reason and disciplined by self-control. She had no respect for people with hearts of gold and heads of wood. Though no slave to worldly considerations, she did not entirely ignore them. Only fools could imagine that they could live happily in the world without caring for what its inhabitants thought. It is evident that Jane Austen is hardly different from other great writers in what may be considered their ultimate morality.

Chapter XIV

JANE AUSTEN'S REALISM

Jane Austen who was possessed of commonsense in the highest measure, was aware of her own limitations as a writer. Her experience of life being confined to a small circle of provincial society, she was quite content to deal with that society in her novels and was careful enough not to over-step the boundaries of her own experience. In other words Jane Austen wrote only of what she knew intimately. As Dr. Chapman has pointed out, it is quite significant that she never attempted to reproduce a conversation of men when by themselves, which in the nature of things she could never have heard.

Though Jane Austen's narrowness of range in her pictures of life is an attestation of her realism, we cannot accept her grand nephew's opinion that she describes men and women exactly as men and women really are, without subjecting it to two great deductions. One of these is on the score of convention and the other is on the score of hyperbole. In both she is the child and inheritor of the eighteenth century as in her realism in other matters she is the forerunner of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was conventional for the eighteenth century writers to contrive a formal and ceremonious speech for their well-born and well-bred characters and a rough home-spun speech for the more ordinary characters and Jane Austen keeps to this convention in her novels. The diction of her well-bred characters is not only senatorial but even touched with romantic melancholy occasionally, as when Anne Elliot says: "All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one ! you need not covet it) is that of loving longest when existence or when hope is gone." This lofty diction used by Jane Austen's high-bred gentlemen and

ladies, though not quite true to life is the novelist's way of letting her readers know that the persons expressing themselves in such a language are to be distinguished from the low or under-bred. Living in an age which paid great importance to distinctions of rank, Jane Austen tried to impress on us the gentility of her characters by turning their speech into the costume of their good breeding. As Somerset Maugham says, "Her dialogue is as natural as contemporary dialogue could be expected to be ; though it may appear a little stilted to us. Jane Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* speaks of her lover's sisters : "They were certainly no friends to his acquaintance with me, which I cannot wonder at, since he might have chosen so much more advantageously in many respects". A modern novelist would not phrase her remarks in this way. Novelists striving for verisimilitude now take pains to make their dialogue as colloquial as possible. But in Jane Austen's day it was a convention to make persons of genteel birth and high education to talk with a balance and grammatical correctness not commonly at their command, though it was accepted as perfectly natural by the readers. But unlike these high-bred characters who talk in language which remind us of Dr. Johnson and in which the Latin word is preferred to the homely English one so as to invest the phrases with a pleasing formality, the ill-bred, the comic and the foolish among Jane Austen's characters talk in a natural way. The very best example of this is provided by the continuous flow of Miss Bates's talk. All the comic or fatuous or under-bred characters of Jane Austen talk in a vivid and natural way. Modern readers of Jane Austen are under the constant humiliation of seeing the English which he himself talks appropriated to the fools and grotesques in her novels. The lofty language which is put into the mouths of her favoured characters is Jane Austen's and her century's way of letting the readers know that persons thus expressing themselves are ladies and gentlemen. Conformity to the prescriptions of her age debarred Jane Austen from being quite realistic in depicting the dialogues of her well-bred characters. Reading through most of these specimens of conversation one gets the impression that

they would have been approved by the author of *Pamela* and extolled as superlative by the author of *Rasselas*. Limiting herself to this conventional speech, Jane Austen found herself in the position of a person compelled to dance in chains. But even her formal diction is not able to crush her vivacity because animation is her greatest point and her discrimination in characters is extraordinary. According to the American critic, O. W. Firkins, three elements have to be particularly noted about Jane Austen's standing as a realist. One is that the convention was very important with her and that, as seen from the dialogues of her ladies and gentlemen, it influenced her conformity to truth. This respect for convention in addition to affecting her style and her ethics, made the whole form of her conversation artificial and "warped realism by informing her novels with what one may call the odour of the seminar."

The second force affecting Jane Austen's realism in her characterisation is the dramatist in her "working on an admirable ground of observed truth, but heightening the lights and blackening the shadows, producing integers of good and evil, intensifying and simplifying till nothing was left of the character but the exaggeration and reiteration of one or possibly two or three qualities, giving in the end the truth, not of life, but of comedy." In her review of the individual characters in Jane Austen's novels, O. W. Firkins points out the fact of over-charge about them. In fact, in the delineation of her comic figures, which include so many of her liveliest and most famous characters, the rule is over-charge. A large part of Miss Austen's best and best-loved characterisation is the untempered and strident characterisation of comedy, the comedy we come across in the works of Moliere, Sheridan, and Goldsmith. Mrs. Jenings, for instance, never open her mouth without some low-bred allusion to courtship. Mrs. Palmer is always characterised by some outgush of imbecile good nature and Mr. Palmer is always making some laconic insult. Fanny Dashwood never opens her mouth without the use of some mercenary manoeuvre nor Lucy Steele without some fawning and malicious calculation. Sir John Middleton cannot help displaying gregarious joviality and Robert Ferrars betrays

some supercilious conceit and Mr. Bennet is always uttering some cynical pleasantry. "Mrs. Bennet is all addle-headed worldness, Lydia Bennet all boisterous levity, Marry Bennet all pompous verbosity, Georgiana Darcy all fluttered reticence." In all these instances Miss Austen seems to draw character as one drives mails, by pounding with all one's might upon one spot.

But this is only part of the truth about her characterisation. The other part of the truth is that in another group of characters, Jane Austen is the restrained, the shaded, the impalpable which help to create the impression of reality. Macaulay's picture of her four young clergymen who are all alike and all unlike is true in its main contention. When we analyse the neutral character by the side of the strongly marked we find that "in Miss Austen's palette the drabs are as significant as the purples. The milder figures on her canvas are true and abler because she succeeds so well in getting shade into her characters. Though she is too apt to spend the delicacies of her workmanship on materials which are cheap by the test of intellectual and moral values, we have, in Emma Woodhouse the rare combination of her most delicate and most spirited work. She is as finely edged as any of the neutral characters and as vital and vivid as her most glaring exaggerations.

Miss Austen is seen to surpass most other novelists in the fewness of the traits out of which she moulds her characters. Edward Ferrars has almost nothing besides affection and diffidence while Henry Tilney cannot boast of any other trait than win-someness in raillery. Jane Austen has a wonderful capacity for bestowing individuality on her characters while compressing her account of them into twenty or thirty lines. Mr. Hurst in *Pride and Prejudice* illustrates this.

Her inability to deal with really complex or highly passionate characters, as well as her virtual suppression of the body as a factor in the delineation of her characters are qualities which limits the field of Jane Austen's realism. She cannot portray a character like Jane Eyre. It is

equally true that in Jane Austen's novels, the sense of the physical appearance of a character, as in Thackeray's Beatrix Esmond, or Meredith's Clara Middleton or Hardy's Eustacia Vye is hardly to be felt. After the first specification of the features of a person, the body seems to vanish and the only things we again hear of are the pallors and blusher which serve to indicate the agitations of the heart. When two people talk together there is hardly any reference to any shifting of position or play of features or meaningful gestures or modulations of tone. But in spite of this baldness the dialogue shines, like the bald head of the Monk in Chaucer's *Prologue* because of the great pains Jane Austen took over her style.

Though Jane Austen wrote to her niece Fanny that pictures of perfection made her sick and wicked, several of her own characters have "their dwelling in paragon Street." Other novelists like Fielding, George Eliot and Stevenson have recoiled from the faultless creations of their fellow-novelists while creating in their turn, models of virtue and goodness. Jane Austen too gives us her pictures of perfection. Elinor Dashwood, in *Sense and Sensibility* seems to have inherited all the virtues. We concede a few faults only to Elizabeth Bennet and her lover Darcy and none at all to the impeccable Jane Bennet. Fanny Price and Anne Elliot are irresistible in their goodness and virtue. Edmund Bertram has one little fault while Henry Tilney has none. Jane Austen's pictures of evil in many characters is equally unrelieved. She has used up all the virtues in the creation of her paragons that she finds no good trait left for people like Fanny Dashwood, Lucy Steele, George Wickham, Lydia Bennet, Lady Catherine, Rev. Collins, Isabella Thorpe, Mr. Elliot or Mrs. Elton. Mrs. Norris is saved from total inhumanity by a paragraph of eleven lines in the last quarter of the book. Here we are told how Mrs. Norris would have shone better than Mrs. Price in the conditions in which the latter had been placed by fate. The truth is that none of her bad characters was quite inhuman to Miss Austen and that it gave her great pleasure to have found a situation in which even Mrs. Norris could appear to advantage.

Another phase of her characterisation deserves particular attention. It is that though Miss Austen was not particularly good at portraying the divided character, she had a special aptitude for drawing what may be called the slanting character. Jane Austen had a rare and precious gift for portraying realistically, characters who try the reader's patience and yet keep their place in the reader's esteem. This can be done only by the close observer of life, through "the tempered and chastened exercise of a faculty whose compass has often been exaggerated, but the quality, the delightfulness, of which it would be difficult to overpraise. To Jane Austen's faculty of observation of the slanting character, we owe the portrayal of the decent and self-respecting meanness of John Dashwood. Similarly, the mixture of self-indulgence and obligingness in Charles Musgrove is of that profound truth which is plumbed only by the wisest and most penetrating fiction. Emma Woodhouse is a character which is admirable in the main, though weakened by a few frailties which are more estranging than damaging. Emma's character is endangered and safeguarded at every point in the narrative till at last she is safely established in the affections of her readers, just as she has been long established in the affections of the worthy squire of Donwell Abbey. According to Firkins, "the skill shown in the convoy is worthy of the sister of two admirals." Again in the representation of Mr. John Knightley who has an ill-temper which is very trying to the reader, Jane Austen shows consummate art. In spite of his ill-temper he is made to keep his place in the reader's esteem. Though the process is quite normal in life, it is reserved in fiction for the hand of the well-tried and mature artist to present it realistically.

W. L. Cross in his book, *The Development of the English Novel*, pays a fine tribute to Jane Austen's realism. He says : "Now when we come to bring together in a few sentences Jane Austen's contribution to fiction, it is quite clear what must be said. She was a realist. She gave anew to the novel, an art and a style, which it once had, particularly in Fielding, but which it had since lost.

Fielding was master of two styles, the burlesque and the rich eloquence of the great orators and moralists; he was at will Cervantic and Demosthenic. Jane Austen's style is the language of everyday life, even with a tinge of its slang, to which she has added an element of beauty. In the manipulation of characters and events, she left much less to chance than did Fielding. The series of events by which Fielding gets Partridge from Somerset to the London playhouse, to frighten him with the ghost in *Hamlet*, and to pay a compliment to Garrick, is very extraordinary, and it was so intended. Jane Austen brings together her village-folk and their visitors, at the dinner-party and the ball, as naturally as they would meet in real life. There is never any question needing explanation why a certain young lady or a certain young gentleman happens to be present. It is not to be supposed that there ever occurred a ball just like that one in *Mansfield Park* or a straw-berry party just like that one described in *Emma*. Jane Austen like all country-girls, was fond of dancing, and she not unlikely picked straw-berries ; but it would be to misinterpret her art to infer that in these scenes she is merely transcribing actual experience. What she is doing is building up scenes in her imagination, taking details from various occasions. Furthermore, we are not to suppose that there ever existed a woman quite so silly as Mrs. Bennet or a country-clergyman obtuse in precisely the same way as Mr. Collins ; or a rattle exactly like Jack Thorpe, who hurries Catherine into his gig "that the tumble may soon be over" and refuses to take his sister out riding "because she has such thick angles." Fanny Price is no specialised portrait, a friend of the author's put into *Mansfield Park* as a compliment ; but a country-girl whose conduct is in perfect accord with her antecedents and surroundings. The matter of observation in passing through Jane Austen's imagination, was never violently disturbed ; the particular bias it received was from a delicate and delightful irony ; there was precisely that selection and recombination and heightening of incident and character that distinguish the comedy of manners from real life."

By the side of this quotation from W. L. Cross, we may consider another from one of the most eminent writers on Jane Austen, namely R. W. Chapman. He says, "Jane Austen was singularly scrupulous in her regard for accuracy in those parts of her fiction which were grounded on fact—such as dates and places. She would not trust herself in a country she did not know, at least by report ; and advised her niece against adventures in Ireland. "Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations. Stick to Bath." She would not put a hedge-row in a country of which hedge-rows were not a feature. There is good reason to believe that in two at least of her books she worked with a calendar ; it is certain that unlike the great majority of novelists, she took great pains to make her dates mutually consistent. In Bath her theatres and concert, her Upper Rooms, and Lower Rooms, are always in the right days of the week. We can make out that the day on which Mr. Bennet lamented that there was not a bit of fish to be got was a Monday."

This scrupulous accuracy, and the attempt to keep as many points of contact with the real world as possible, made her to ask her brother for leave to use the names of his own ships when she wanted some. In *Emma* she chose for the background of her story the village of Highbury which is near Leatherhead in Surrey. The names Randalls and Knightley actually came from Leatherhead. We can find many other points of contact between Jane Austen's writing and the actual world in which she moved. Her accounts of sailors and seamanship owe a great deal to her sailor-brothers. Similarly, the origin of Fanny Price's amber cross is another point of contact with reality. This element in Jane Austen's work made some contemporary critics, to think that her characters had real prototypes. We learn from Jane Austen's Letters what a Miss Dusautoy had a great idea of being Fanny Price—she and her youngest sister together, who was named Fanny. Again in the 'Opinions' on Emma, she notes that a Miss Herries was

convinced that Jane Austen had meant Mrs. and Miss Bates for some acquaintance of theirs. Similarly it was thought by many that William Price was a portrait of Charles Austen, though the truth is that any midshipman, affectionate, open-hearted, and adventurous might have sat for the portrait of William Price. Jane Austen when questioned about the originals of her portraits of men and women replied that though she thought it quite fair to note the pecularities and weaknesses of her fellow-beings in her characters it was her desire to create, not to reproduce. Hence what we have in her immortal works is not merely the reproducing of the material of her observation but the selection and recombination and heightening of incident and character that distinguish the comedy of manners from real life." As Bailey points out, no young lady was so unfailingly brilliant and humorous, such a combination of sense and character, wit and charm, as Elizabeth Bennet. This is because Jane Austen, like a true artists, concentrates and intensifies by turning all the light upon the quality she wants to bring out ; yet in such a way as to make her portrait no caricature, but something more natural than nature, truer than truth itself. This is the kind of realism or truthfulness to life which we come across in Jane Austen's portrayal of life.

Chapter XV

JANE AUSTEN'S HUMOUR

Jane Austen's novels provide the finest examples of comedy in English prose fiction. Not only in her attitude to her characters but also in the choice of her themes and the management of her narrative and dialogue she reminds us of the best writers of comedy. She makes her best-loved heroine, Elizabeth Bennet to admit : "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, to divert me. I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can." Here we can almost hear the voice of Jane Austen herself, speaking in defence of the writer of the comedy that she has shown herself to be in her novels. Like her heroine, Elizabeth, she never ridicules what is wise or good. But all follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies in human character, appealed to her sense of fun and she made it her habit to note them down for future use in her novels whenever she came across with them in actual life. Also she pondered deep and long on the disparity between the truth about things and their appearances by which human-beings are very often deluded. Jane Austen delighted in contemplating the comic situations into which her fellow-beings are led as a result of their own follies, delusions, self-contradictions and foibles. This delight in the comedy of life she has imparted to us through highly entertaining characters and situations of her novels. Bradley says about her that the attitude of comedy is reflected in her all novels. In his opinion she is not a little influenced by writers of drama, particularly the writers of comedy. Many other scenes and much of her dialogue would shine to advantage if transferred bodily to the stage. Many of her characters like Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Miss Bates, Mr. Woodhouse and Mrs. Elton are highly entertaining figures of comedy. Most famous among them all is the immortal Rev. Collins at whose birth Shakespeare

himself could have assisted and at whose baptism Sir John himself could have stood God-father. There are also the less important fools and snobs who must have amused their creator immensely and whose follies and vanities she laughs at quite good humouredly in the novels.

But it is not merely the fools and snobs and their words and actions which amuse the readers of Jane Austen's novels. The apparently wise, the self-righteous and the virtuous also come in for comic treatment at the novelist's hands. She makes a very effective use of dramatic irony, emphasising the difference between things as they are and things as they appear to be in the eyes of her deluded men and women. The source of our amusement often lies in realising the inability of the characters to see the situation as it really is and as we and the novelist see it. If we fail to perceive the ironical amusement of Jane Austen's own attitude we will not be able to enjoy much of the humour of her novels. She is highly diverted by human follies and foibles and weaknesses and she is far from being angry or embittered or cynical at discovering what fools we mortals are. Human absurdities and illusions, so far as they do not lead to tragic consequences, ought to please us, according to Jane Austen's view. They, in fact, make our fellow-beings all the more lovable and interesting. Pictures of perfection are likely to be odious, because they are not human and do not belong to this inperfect world of ours, in which Jane Austen and her readers are interested. Many things are not right about this world and its inhabitants, but this only makes them more interesting and lovable. For instance, we see how Emma Woodhouse, who has all along been earnestly trying to improve the mind and fortunes of Harriet Smith, reacts in quite an unexpected manner at the girl's fond assurance that Mr. Knightley took an interest in her. All thoughts of seeing Harriet happy and well-established, give way to jealous and angry ones now because all unconsciously Emma has been in love with Mr. Knightley all the time. We who know the reason for Emma's reaction, feel amused and also pleased because it is the right human reaction. We do not expect her to be a stoic and to work

for Harriet's happiness unmindful of her own because, like her creator we are less of moralists than of humorists.

The comic point of view is most in evidence in the stories of *Northanger Abbey* and *Emma.* In *Northanger Abbey,* we are enabled to laugh hilariously at the silly fears and imaginings of the heroine, Catherine Morland whose head is full of the ideas imbibed from the grotesque romantic tales then popularly read by the young girls of her age. Even the very words in which Catherine is described, indicate the author's amused but kindly attitude to her and her class. Jane Austen says about her, "her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affection of any kind, her manners just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl ; her person pleasing, and, when in good looks, pretty, and her mind about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is." This kindly and good humoured attitude to people whom she laughs at and expects us to laugh at is a very pleasing quality of Jane Austen. With beautifully comic anti-climax, Jane Austen traces the story of Catherine's Gothic adventures and the waking up from the Gothic dream induced by too much reading of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances.

In the opinion of the critic, Howells, "Catherine Morland is a goose, but a very engaging goose, and a goose you must respect for her sincerity, her high principles, her generous trust of others, and her patience under trials that would be too great for much stronger heads......and in spite of her romantic folly she has so much good heart that it serves her in place of good sense." *Northanger Abbey* is highly amusing because of the way the sentimental Gothic heroine is parodied in it and also because of the indication contained in the book that there is more on earth than more common-sense.

In Emma Woodhouse, we come across comedy of another kind. Emma's character is conceived and executed in the comic vein. She prides herself on her wisdom, and is vain of her perceptions, and is snobbish, domineering, rash

and selfish. In fact she has the very qualities which the writer of comedy can set himself to ridicule. Jane Austen gives us much pleasure by depicting how Emma becomes the victim of her own illusions and for a time lives in her own imaginary world, far different from the real world. With consummate art, Jane Austen shows how Emma's disillusionment is worked out through a series of blunders, which though highly mortifying to the heroine, are very entertaining to the reader. In the course of the narrative we are introduced to highly amusing characters like Miss Bates, who, in the opinion of R. W. Chapman, is a Shakespearean comic character, comparable with Sir John himself. Here again, in the presentation of this garrulous old maid who is certainly meant to be laughed at, we find the humanity of Miss Austen. She cannot forgive Emma for rudeness to the harmless old creature because her words would the generous heart of this poor woman. This shows that though Jane Austen might laugh at people because of their follies and foible, she really cared for them as human-beings and could not think of inflicting pain on them. Her attitude is reflected in that of the worthy Mr. Knightley. In Mr. Woodhouse we have another beloved bore who is able to provide much pleasant entertainment to the readers through his eccentricities. Mrs. Elton is another comic character who amuses the readers by her incessant talk about her brother-in-law's baroucbelandau and about "people with extensive grounds." But she is shown to be more foolish than comic and we do not care for her as we care for Miss Bates.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, it is the minor characters like Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Rev. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh who makes us laugh most. There is certainly an element of exaggeration in the portrayal of these characters, but it is only the kind of exaggeration which distinguishes the comedy of manners from real life. As Bailey says, "When we read *Pride and Prejudice*, we do not ask ourselves whether any husband and father ever gave himself so continuously and humorously to that business of laughing at his family which he makes us enjoy as much as he enjoyed it

himself! or whether any wife and mother was ever so entirely absorbed in being ridiculous as Mrs. Bennet........ Though it would be hard to discover in life a woman who never says a sensible thing, yet the magic of art knows how to make Mrs. Bennet alive and convincing from her first word to her last." As a result of the magic of her art, we have in Mr. and Mrs. Bennet two of the most absurd but most entertaining of Jane Austen's characters.

The most enjoyable aspect of Jane Austen's humour is her gentle irony which is all-pervading. It is there in her delineation of character, in her management of dialogue and in her manipulation of incidents. Baker says about the delightful use of irony in *Pride and Prejudice* : "The reader has learned to look out for irony in every twist of the story, and particularly in the speeches, many of which have had to be unsaid by the speakers or wished unsaid, not least by Elizabeth," It penetrates the whole structure of the novel. These words can, with equal truth be applied to the characters and situations in the other novels and most of all, to Emma. We take great delight in noting how the book turns on the contrast of appearance to reality and the significance of the novel lies in the variety of illusions and in the complexity of reality ! Only an amused and impartial spectator of the comedy of life, like Jane Austen, can become keenly aware of this irony and she tries to communicate her awareness of this to her readers through her novels. There is admirable use of irony in the conversations in *Mansfield Park* where Edmund Bertram either consults Fanny Price about whether he should propose to Mary Crawford or advises her to accept Henry Crawford, never dreaming of the secret which makes both consultations equally painful to her, the secret that she is all the while in love with Edmund himself. No one is more fond of this ancient device of the Greek dramatists than Jane Austen of using a conversation in which the spectator or reader perceives a significance which is quite concealed from one or both of the actors or speakers. In using this irony she brings about the situation quite naturally and with very great effect and our enjoyment of the irony in proportionately enhanced. One very delightful feature of Jane Austen's

humour lies in her ironic observations about men and life in general. These observations are cast into the form of aphoristic statements, which, the author implies, cannot be questioned in their truth or wisdom. One might take examples of these, at random, from any of her novels and find them equally amusing as well as arresting. There is of course much wisdom in them, based on a very keen observation of human life and behaviour, but the wise sayings are passed on to us with an ironic smile. As an example of this we may take the sentence with which Jane Austen's most famous novel *Pride and Prejudice* opens. She says that it is a truth universally accepted that a single man in possession of a large fortune must certainly be in need of a wife. Through such a sentence Jane Austen is having her laugh at all the enthusiastic match-makers who are eager to cater to the need of such a man as she describes. Again we come across a very ironic statement in Jane Austen's description of the reasons which prompted the elder Miss Bertram to get married immediately. She says, "In all the important preparations of the mind she was complete; being prepared for matrimony by an hatred of home, restraint, and tranquility; by the misery of disappointed affection, and contempt of the man she was to marry. The rest might wait." There is the most delightful ironic humour in every sentence of the letter written by the inimitable Mr. Collins, to Mr. Bennet. There is also pleasing irony in the words of Miss Bates when she says that she never can open her mouth without saying some thing foolish. Jane Austen's irony, like her humour never carries a sting. She laughs at her fellow-beings wherever she finds them betraying their follies, nonsense, whims and inconsistencies and she makes us also to laugh with her when by their own delusions her characters have been led into situations which make us exclaim, "Lord, what fools these mortals be."

W.L. Cross, in *The Development of the English Novel*, makes the following comment on Jane Austen's humour : "A guiding principle of hers was that the lighter conduct of men and women results from their being dupes of misconception. 'One takes up a notion and lets it run away with

him,' as when the Rev. William Collins imagines that his fair cousin Elizabeth will jump at an opportunity of becoming his wife. 'One believes herself in the secret of everybody's feelings, and with unpardonable arrogance proposes to arrange everybody's destiny; such are the irrepressible matchmakers, and the inexperienced Emma, who at length sees the almost tragic consequences of 'the blunders of head and heart.' Herein, in the detailed application to life of Bacon's Idols of the Cave and the Market Place, lies in a large measure the humour of Jane Austen. The reader, being in the secret, looks on at the mistaken and mistaking actors, seeing men and women, variously obtuse, moving in shadows and half-lights. This is a delicate psychological humour akin to the higher comedy of Shakespeare."

Thus we see from her novels that Jane Austen had a prodigious sense of humour. She liked to laugh and she was fond of making others laugh. Naturally all humorists like to share good things with others when they think of them. It is true, one can hardly be funny without being a little malicious. The milk of human kindness does not have any pep in it. Jane had the keenest appreciation of the absurdity of others, their little weaknesses, affectations, vanities and foibles. But it must be admitted that she was only amused by these and not annoyed. Her amiability often prevented her from saying to people, things which might give pain, but she did not mind amusing herself at their expense with Cassedre. There is absolutely no ill-nature in the most biting of her remarks. Her humour was admirably based on observation and mother wit. Though her observation was keen and searching and her sentiment edifying, it was her humour which gave point to her observation and a prime liveliness to her sentiment. The very first sentiment of *Pride and Prejudice* which puts you in good humour illustrates this.

Chapter XVI

JANE AUSTEN'S CHARACTERISATION

The smallness of Jane Austen's range as a novelist and her limiting her studies of English life in the country-villages to one social class have not prevented her from giving us an infinite variety of human characters in her novels. In the truth and variety of the characters, she has portrayed for us and she reminds us of Shakespeare. In the justice and impartiality with which she presents her men and women she is again akin to Shakespeare. It is interesting to note what Harold Childe has to say on this point in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*. He says, "Jane Austen had an extraordinarily perspicacious and sensitive understanding ; not of women only, but of men as well. Notwithstanding her sheltered life and the moderate amount of her learnings she saw deeply and clearly to the springs of action and understood the finest shades of feeling and motive. She was sensitive to the slightest deviation from the standard of good breeding and good sense ; and any deviation (there can be no doubt of it) appealed to her sense of fun." Her comic creations like the immortal Collins and the garrulous Miss Bates bear comparison with the best of Shakespeare's comic characters. As one critic has put it, Sir John himself could have stood godfather to the no less interesting Rev. Collins and Shakespeare himself could have assisted at his birth. This is the highest praise one could give to a novelist's genius for comedy and Jane Austen well deserves it. Her attitude to her characters is more than of the writer of comedy than that of the satirist. It is as if we can hear the very voice of Jane Austen when Elizabeth Bennet tells Darcy : "I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can."

It delighted Jane Austen to reproduce in her characters all the follies and foibles of her fellow-beings which continually diverted her. Through a most delicate use of irony and a keen wit and lively humour the novelist provides capital entertainment for herself and her readers in representing the fine shades of folly among her nicely distinguished characters. All her fools and flirts and brilliant young heroines and their worthy admirers are finely distinguished from the rest of their tribe. To take her heroines first, Elizabeth Bennet is beautiful and brilliant like Emma Woodhouse, but there the comparison stops. Marianne Dashwood, Catherine Morland, Fanny Price, Anne Elliot all are attractive young women in their own individual and distinct ways and we cannot say that there is much in common between one heroine and another in her natural environment or character and attributes. As for her foolish characters we find that the immortal Rev. Collins is quite distinguished from Mr. Elton in his folly just as Lucy Steele is distinguished from Mrs. Elton. The proud Miss Elliot is again quite different from the proud Misses Bertram. No single character in her novels is a replica of another. This quality in her characterisation has made Macaulay who was neither the first nor the least distinguished of her critics, to comment : "Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who .....have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain sense, commonplace, all such as we meet everyday. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human-beings." This nice discrimination between each and every other member of one social class or profession or type is a very admirable feature of Jane Austen's characterisation. It has entitled her to the place nearest to Shakespeare among English writers.

We will not find among all the men and women created by Jane Austen, a single person who does not belong to the everyday life of common existence. She never

attempts to portray guilt and crime and violence and stormy passions are alike excluded from her novels. We will not come across strange or exotic personages in her novels. For this very reason people who cry out like Edward Fitzgerald: "Give me people, places and things, which I don't and cannot see; Antiquaries, Jeanie Deans, Dalgeltys etc." will certainly be disappointed with her novels. That she never goes out of her parlour, hyperbolically at least, is the truth about Jane Austen. But without leaving her chosen field, she has been able to observe keenly and to transcribe accurately all the varieties and shades of human character that came her way. This has made even detractors like Charlotte Bronte to admit the "Chinese fidelity" and "the miniature delicacy" of her portrayal of human character.

Jane Austen's characters, except for her portrait of the slovenly Price family have nothing to do with guilt or misery. They belong to the aristocracy and upper middle class of the English village and its neighbourhood. There may be incidental descriptions of the season at Bath with its fast set or of humble sailor-life at Portsmouth and Lyme. Miss Austen's young gentlemen like Darcy, Knightley and Edmund Bertram invariably have good incomes, and are either seeking or ought to be seeking wives. The pretty young women not always well provided for, have to be married off and match-making mothers and aunts are busy about it while the girls themselves are quite ready to be led to the altar. There are, invariably, country-clergymen, who if they do not already have wives, get them in the course of the story. There are gentlemanly villains like Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*, who induce beautiful and reckless girls to elope with them. Their friends for family reasons pass by the event and try to make the best of it by providing for them liberally. The men, including the clergy, have no occupations excepting dining out, attending balls, taking part in private theatricals, talking about their horses, going up to London and moving about from estate to estate. The young ladies occupy themselves with reading romances, collecting and transcribing charades, thumbing their harps or

pianoforte, playing whist, drinking tea and eating buttered bread and baked apples. Making garments for the poor, cutting out stomachers for elderly relatives, knitting garters for grandmothers, riding a little for exercise, picking strawberries, visiting the estates of their future husbands, working transparencies for their windows are among other occupations of Jane Austen's young women.

There is a delicate psychological humour comparable to the higher comedy of Shakespeare in Jane Austen's representation of the misunderstood and misunderstanding characters of her novels, "variously obtuse, moving in shadows and half-lights." A very frequently-stressed principle of hers was that the lighter conduct of men and women results from their being the dupes of their own misconceptions. People like the Rev. Collins who believes himself a very desirable match for his fair cousin, Elizabeth, and Emma Woodhouse who believes she can order the lives of her friends and neighbours, take up a notion and let it run away with them. While the irrepressible match-makers go on making ludicrous blunders we feel like exclaiming "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Thus we are in the very mood of comedy, the mood in which Jane Austen's personages are created.

Characterisation in Jane Austen's novels, is carried out mostly through conversation, which is combined with narration in little patches and description which is built into the narrative. Letters serve the purpose of monologue or soliloquy in a drama. Every little incident and description is carefully introduced to throw some new light upon character. The conversation at breakfast, the visit, the morning walk, the village-balls and parties are all meant to make us better acquainted with the characters.

We cannot help being impressed by the truthfulness of Jane Austen's representations of human nature and the impartiality with which she analyses the faults and foibles of even her most favourite characters. It is true that she portrays men and women as they are in their private lives which reveals their true characters and temperaments much

better than their behaviour in public. As Lord David Cecil says, a man's relation to his wife and children is at least as important a part of his life as his relation to his beliefs and career : and reveals him fundamentally. Jane Austen reveals her characters to us, not in moments of crisis, but in the trivial incidents of everyday life. As life is mostly made up of little things, human nature is amply revealed in them as in big crises. With her faculty for discernment Jane Austen knows how a picnic or party can reveal selfishness, kindness, arrogance, vanity or sincerity as a battle or any other catastrophe. Even more vividly than Dickens himself she could visualise outward idiosyncrasies of her creatures and reflect their characters through their manners and ways of speech.

Jane Austen's observation and record of folly and meanness and pretence though it may be considered her greatest talent, does not entirely explain her hold on our affections. The secret of her success in characterisation and of her appeal for us is the gift of imaginative sympathy which demands an abundant share of the qualities on which it is exercised. We have to think of Jane Austen as a woman "richly endowed ; a woman of great vitality, of generous impluses, of a large-hearted charity ; gifted, in a pre-eminent degree, with that power of intuitive sympathy in which women excel." Like her heroine, Anne Elliot, she "prized the frank, the open hearted, the eager character beyond all others. She was captivated by warmth and sincerity and tenderness of heart and this is reflected in her characterisation. She makes her Emma exclaim : "There is no charm equal to tenderness of heart .. ..Dear Harriet ! I will not change you for the clearest-headed, longest sighted, best-judging female breathing."

Jane Austen's wealth of sympathy is not confined to the prime objects of her affection, among the children of her imagination. Even if she cannot love or approve all of them, she at least wants us to understand them as she herself did. Her warm human sympathy is extended even to the objects of her ridicule or disapproval. Characters of folly or simplicity like that of Mr. Woodhouse or Miss Bates

are presented in such a way that while we laugh at them, we also bear with them. Through the words of Mr. Knightley, Jane Austen expresses her disapproval of Emma's rudeness to the simple, garrulous old Miss Bates.

E. M. Forster, writing on aspects of the novel, divides fictitious characters into two classes, the flat and the round. Flat characters were also called types and they used to be known as humours in the seventeenth century. In their purest form they are constructed round a single idea or quality. Mrs. Micawber in *David Coperfield* and Calob Balderstone in *The Bride of Lammermoor* are examples of flat characters. Jane Austen also gives us examples of flat characters or humour. Henry Tilney, Mr. Woodhouse, Charlotte Lucas and Lady Bertram are two-dimensional characters in the main but they are not always tethered to their respective qualities and are seen to emerge into round characters occasionally.

Miss Austen's characters, especially all her important characters, are characters in the round or capable of orotundity. Even Miss Bates inspite of all her tiresome garrulity, has a mind and Elizabeth Elliot a heart. As for her well-rounded characters, they give us pleasure every time they make their appearance, unlike the repetitive pleasure which is caused by a character in Dickens. This is because Jane Austen's characters are never caricatures but highly organized beings who function all around. Even if the plot of the novels made greater demands on them they would still be adequate. They are ready for an extended life such as the scheme of the book seldom requires them to lead and hence they lead their actual lives so very satisfactorily.

It is characteristic of her consistently ironical attitude that there is not too much idealisation in her characterisation. Like Thackeray she was a stern realist who wants us to remember that even the best of men and women have their share of human failings, weaknesses and vices. She makes the unselfish and high-minded Fanny Price unhappy in her parents' home at Portsmouth, thereby showing her in an unfavourable, though true light. As for Emma, she

has innumerable little failings which make many readers to criticise her severely. But Jane Austen's consistent fidelity to human nature prevents her from making out her heroes and heroines as models of unalloyed virtue. She knows and tells the whole truth about her men and women including the most odious ones. She disliked Mrs. Norris as much as any of us would, and yet she lets us see that the same medding energy which made her so odious, would have served her far better had her lot been that of poor Mrs. Price. This impartiality on the part of their creator makes her characters all the more real and three-dimensional figures who can be viewed from several angles.

Inspite of the smallness of her canvas, she was usually concerned with three or four families in a country-village. Jane Austen has given us an astonishing variety of characters. Even in the delineation of her heroines her range is wide enough. Elizabeth Bennet, Fanny Price, Elinor Dashwood, Emma Woodhouse, Catherine Morland and Anne Elliot, are all eminently attractive young women who are carefully distinguished from one another. There is much that is pleasing and lovable in each one of them, but there the comparison almost ends. Each has a vitality, brilliance and individuality of her own and were we to meet them in actual life we could never mistake one for another. Her eligible young bachelors are also equally well-individualised. The proud Darcy with his aristocratic contempt for the country-girls like Elizabeth and Jane has nothing in common with George Knightley, the kindly, sensible squire with his more democratic sympathies and more courteous behaviour even towards a little nobody like Harriet Smith. Again Edmund Bertram who is dimissed as a prig by many readers has little in common with Captain Wentworth whom Anne Elliot marries at last. Among the subsidiary character we find that her fools, flirts, bores and snobs are nicely distinguished from one another. Her country-clergymen too offer much variety and each is entertaining in his own individual way.

Jane Austen's greatest successes are in the portraits of her women-characters, particularly her heroines. They were

so very real to her that she used to look for their portraits when she went to exhibitions and picture-galleries. Jane Austen has succeeded much better than any other novelists in the portraits of her men, too. They are, however, less complete than her women-characters. The conditions of her life made it possible for her to know men intimately, except in the company of women. As her men are presented in a woman's world and seen through a woman's eye, their portraits may be lacking in those features that no woman can easily observe, of the ways of men in a masculine society.

The comprehensive and searching view of human nature which we came across in Jane Austen's portraits of men and women invest her characters with an abiding charm and universal appeal. Though her pictures of her contemporaries are quite accurate and vivid, this is not the most important quality about her characterisation. In other words, her men and women, in addition to being typical Englishmen and English women of the social class to which she herself belonged, are also types of humanity we come across from age to age. Her lively young heroines, her match-making mothers and aunts, her country-clergymen and her eccentric as well as odious characters all have their counterparts in different ages. They may put on different clothes and assume different manners but their essential human traits do not change from age to age. We still may find among us odious characters like Mrs. Norris or garrulous old women like Miss Bates or self-deceiving fools like Emma or clergymen like Mr. Elton or worthy gentleman like Mr. Knightley or undisciplined romantics like Marianne Dashwood. Their costumes and their manners may be different in different ages but underneath outward appearances, lies their essential human nature which never changes. The secret of Jane Austen's characterisation lies in her ability to perceive clearly and represent truthfully this essential human nature in its varying aspects.

Chapter XVII

INTRODUCTION TO EMMA

JANE AUSTEN'S BEST AND MOST MISUNDERSTOOD WORK—HOW IT DIFFERS FROM *MANSFIELD PARK* AND HOW IT IS AKIN TO *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

When *Emma* was published in 1815 it was dedicated to the Prince Regent and it was reviewed in the Quarterly Review by Scott, the literary sovereign of the age. This shows the proud position which Jane Austen had already attained to, though her name did not still appear on the title-page. Though Scott's review was not one of unmixed praise, it had seized upon some of the most outstanding qualities of Jane Austen as a novelist. The 'neatness and point' with which narrative is conducted, the quite yet comic dialogue in which the characters of the speakers evolve themselves with dramatic effect, and the novelist's feelings and characters of ordinary life, are some of the things in Jane Austen's novels which Scott has selected for praise. The admirable felicity of phrase and the artist's touch which renders commonplace things and characters interesting are Jane Austen's greatest gifts as a novelist and these are nowhere better illustrated than in *Emma* which vies with *Pride and Prejudice* for the first place among Jane Austen's novels. The novelist had once written to her favourite niece Fanny: "You are so odd and all the time so perfectly natural: so peculiar in yourself and yet so like everybody else." This is the truth about the finest characters in fiction and particularly so in the world of Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse. Following the central law of imaginative creation Jane Austen has presented to us in *Emma*, as in other novels, characters who are at once universal and particular, human and individual.

"Emma is, I think clearly, Jane Austen's masterpiece," says R. W. Chapman, though no less a person than Somerset Maugham remarks, "Emma is the only one of Miss Austen's novels that I find long-winded. Maugham goes on to say that he cannot take any great interest in the love-affair of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, adding that though Miss Bates is immensely interesting, we get too much of her. He considers Emma and says that the way she patronizes her social inferiors is repulsive. Emma is not a great favourite among Jane Austen's heroines and the novelist herself anticipated public opinion when she wrote, "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." But no one will deny that Emma is one of the best conceived and worked out of all Jane Austen's characters. She is more completely the centre of interest in the novel than the heroines of the other novels. All that is best in the novel depends on Emma, who is alive and convincing from first to last. "In her selfishness and in her goodness, in her commonsense and in her folly, in the social and personal vanity which is always leading her into disasters, and in the soundness both of heart and mind which is always there to get her ultimately out of them," she is true to life. Though she does not capture one's heart as Anne Elliot does, nor one's heart and head as Elizabeth Bennet does, she is quite a delightful creation.

Among the minor characters though there is no one as pleasing as Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, we have, in the incomparable Miss Bates and the very lovable Mr. Woodhouse, two rivals to Lady Catherine and Mr. Collins in the field of comedy. As Bailey puts it, we have in Miss Bates the best attempt to put upon the stage of the novel the most truthful representation of "incessant and inconsequent garrulity. Chapman considers her truly Shakespearean, and comparable on her own plane, with Sir John himself. Mrs. Elton reminds us of Lady Catherine by her insolence and snobbery. While hating and despising her, we also laugh at her when she begins boasting about the barouche-landau and people who have extensive grounds. Mr. and Mrs. Weston are both convincing and Mr. Weston is

a very good sketch of "the cheerful, amiable, optimistic, unimportant man," "with nothing to do and always busy about doing it."

According to Chapman, the supremacy of Emma lies not in its characterisation but in its matchless symmetry of design and in the flow of human sympathy and charity that beats steadily beneath the smooth polished skin of the narrative. The agony of Box Hill and that of the final disillusionment of Emma are keenly felt by us. Emma Woodhouse is different from the rest of Jan Austen's novels in that she learns and changes and grows. She dislikes her imaginary rivals even before she is aware of her love. It is jealousy that opens her eyes to love. The sensible and gentlemanly Knightley, though aware of his love, is not aware of his jealousy. The conscious and unconscious loves and jealousies provide us with great entertainment. The business of the novel, like that of Jane Austen's other novels, is that of getting people engaged and married. It is a very delightful comedy of match-making errors, which also contains the most anxiously exciting love-scne in Jane Austen except the last scene of persuasion.

Emma stands unique among Jane Austen's novels in one important respect. Unlike the heroines of the other novels, the heroine of this novel, Emma Woodhouse learns and changes and grows in the course of the story. To begin with, she is a blind, wilful, conceited and utterly spoilt young woman. But before the story ends she has matured into a sensible woman who has been taught by her many blunders to see herself and others as they really are. The only other character in Jane Austen's novels who undergoes an equal or even greater change is Darcy, in *Pride and Prejudice*. The change in Darcy's case is more violent, more incredible and less amusing. There is resemblance between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* in this important respect. In both the novels love leads to self-knowledge. The eyes of Emma are opened by her love for Knightley just as the eyes of Darcy are opened by her love for Elizabeth. The opening of Darcy's eyes to his own imperfection is more sudden and painful than Emma's slow waking

up to her own foolishness and conceit. While Darcy fears no rival with Elizabeth, Emma dislikes her imaginary rivals before she is aware of her love for Knightley. It is only through the discovery of her jealousy that Emma discovers her love. When Harriet spoke of Mr. Knightley's possible attachment to her, it darted through Emma with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself. The conscious and unconscious loves and jealousies so interestingly depicted by Jane Austen provide great entertainment for the reader. "The business of Emma, like that of all Jane Austen's novels, and even more than the rest, is that of getting people engaged and married." Everybody busily engaged in this all-important business blunders very agreeably in *Emma*. Emma begins by imagining Mr. Elton to be in love with Harriet and later she believes Harriet to be in love with Frank Churchill. She also believes Jane to be in love with Mr. Dixon, for a while, besides fancying Mr. Knightley to have some interest in Jane. She believes Frank Churchill to be in love with her and supposes herself to be in love with him, at least for a while. She never discovers that Mr. Elton is paying his attentions to her or that Harriet is raising her thoughts to Mr. Knightley. She never guesses the secret of Frank and Jane. She is blind to Mr. Knightley's devotion to herself and equally blind to her own love for him. Most of the other characters blunder along with Emma and the book becomes a comedy of match-making errors.

There is resemblance between *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* in one respect. In *Mansfield Park* the fixture of the story at the park is almost as unchangeable as that of Lady Bertram herself. The removal of the tale to Portsmouth with Fanny Price and her baggage makes us quite uncomfortable because we have got used to the atmosphere of *Mansfield Park*. Similarly the story of *Emma* is confined to the neighbourhood of Hartfield and Donwell in Highbury. There are, of course, frequent excursions to Richmond, Windsor, London and Bath, but the main characters, and particularly the heroine Emma and her father, hardly ever leave Highbury. So in both the novels we have the

impression of being literally confined to a small world. This is a world in which the personages are relatively few and intimately known to each other. They form what may be called a closed circuit and have very little to do with the outside world. This may be regarded as a characteristic common to the two novels. But in all other respects the novels are quite different from each other. *Emma* is definitely superior to *Mansfield Park* in conception, execution and characterisation. It is generally held to be second only to *Pride and Prejudice* among Jane Austen's novels.

Emma stands in a class by itself among Jane Austen's novels in one important respect. It has an individuality which is that of the village of Highbury and the communal effect is strongly imparted by the novel. This explains and almost justifies the negation of a formal plot. We feel that a story of such a region as Highbury might very well copy the deliberation of its brooks and the intervals between events might be as irregular as the spaces between its houses. Once in Highbury we are in a world with broad margins. Here everybody's share of space and time is much larger than in the compact and busy world of the metropolis which is not very far away. Highbury has its own reserved and leisurely but persevering social life. It has also its loose but secure ties and there is malice enough to temper the dullness and good will. Highbury folk are characterised by a placidity which is patient of the usual, happily blent with a curiosity to which the mildest forms of the unusual are exciting. Bovine, in a sense, the life of Highbury is, but it does not prevent Emma from being the healthiest and sunniest of Miss Austen's works.

Chapter XVIII

DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Chapter 1

Emma Woodhouse, beautiful, rich and intelligent, had lived a life of unclouded happiness under the tender care of her governess Miss Taylor who had been in the family for sixteen years and was regarded by Emma and her sister Isabella more as a friend than as a governess. Isabella had married and had settled down in London with her lawyer-husband and little children, coming down to live with her father and sister at Hartfield only for short holidays.

Emma and her father, felt a void in the family circle, when Miss Taylor married Mr. Weston, a man of pleasing character and easy fortunes and suitable age and settled down at Randalls, about half a mile from Hartfield. Emma particularly felt sad and lonely at being separated from her affectionate companion who had made her life so bright and cheerful and had made herself useful in a thousand little ways. Mr. Woodhouse who had been a valetudinarian all his life and being anything but young in his ways and habits, could not be much of a companion for his sprightly, intelligent and charming young daughter. Though Miss Taylor had made a very good marriage and Emma prided herself on her having been the first to guess that such a marriage could be brought about, Mr. Woodhouse could not easily get reconciled to the idea of their having lost Miss Taylor for ever. Emma consoled him by pointing out that the Westons were within such easy reach of Hartfield as to make daily contact with them possible. Father and daughter were soon joined in their conversation by Mr. Knightley of Donwell Abbey; an intimate friend and frequent visitor and the elder brother of Isabella's husband. He brought news of the well-being of Isabella and her

family in London and expressed pleasure at the good match Miss Taylor had made in spite of the considerable loss it meant to Emma and her father. Mr. Woodhouse who generally disapproved of matrimony felt sorry for "poor Miss Taylor" who had evidently taken a foolish step, according to him. As Emma's match-making guess had come true in this instance, her father told her not to make any more matches. She assured him that she would not make any for herself but could not resist the temptation of making a decent match for their young parson, Mr. Elton, for whom, at the time, there was no one deserving enough in their village of Highbury. Both Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley told Emma not to attempt to show her goodwill to Mr. Elton by choosing a bride for him. It was better to invite him to dinner and leave him to choose his own wife.

Chapter 2

Mr. Weston, born into a wealthy and respectable family in Highbury had joined the militia of his country and had become Captain Weston when he was introduced to Miss Churchill, of an aristocratic Yorkshire family, who fell in love with him. Despite the objections raised by her brother and his wife, she married Captain Weston and soon helped to make bankrupt of him, by her spendthrift ways. She died after three years, leaving a son, whom her brother and wife soon adopted, having no children of their own. Quitting the militia, Mr. Weston engaged in trade and soon earned the means of purchasing Randalls, a small estate adjoining Highbury. He was now happily married to the virtuous and lovable Miss Taylor who had helped him and advised him in his plans after returning to Highbury. In marrying the penniless governess, Mr. Weston had only himself to peace, because his son was being brought up as the acknowledged heir of his uncle at Enscombe and had even adopted his mother's family name, being called Frank Churchill. Mr. Weston saw him every year in London and was proud of him. Mr. Frank Churchill who was reported to be a very handsome young man of pleasing

manners, was one of the boasts of Highbury. Soon after his father's marriage to Miss Taylor he wrote her a very gallant letter, announcing his parents shortly. Mrs. Weston was quite pleased at this mark of respect and affection and conveyed the news of Frank's coming to all her friends. She was on the whole well pleased with her situation and her only regret was that her good friends, Mr. Woodhouse and Emma, would miss her companion-ableness which had cheered them not a little during her sixteen years at Hartfield. She consoled herself by thinking that Emma, with her strength of character and resourcefulness, would soon get over her regrets, and make Mr. Woodhouse reconciled to the inevitable.

Chapter 3

Mr. Woodhouse who hardly went out on account of his fears for his delicate constitution, was never without his own select company of friends at Hartfield. The Westons from Randalls, Mr. Knightley from Donwell Abbey and Mr. Elton from the vicarage were most frequently making up evening parties or dining with him and indulging his little whims and fancies regarding the avoidance of late hours and large, noisy dinner parties. Mr. Knightly and the Westons were deeply attached to the family and Mr. Elton found much enjoyment in the amiable company, and the excellent food at Hartfield and the sweet smiles of Miss Woodhouse.

The next in order of importance and intimacy among the visitors at Hartfield were three ladies—Mrs. Bates, the widow of a former vicar of Highbury, Miss Bates, her elderly spinster daughter and Mrs. Goddard, the Mistress of an old fashioned boarding school at which a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were to be had for a reasonable price. These three ladies felt greatly honoured by being invited to spend an agreeable evening with Mr. Woodhouse and his daughter, and Emma liked them because of the pleasure which her father found in their company.

One morning, Emma received a note from Mrs. Goddard, enquiring whether she could be allowed to bring

with her one of her pupils, a certain Harriet Smith, to the evening party a Hartfield. Emma joyfully welcomed this young girl of seventeen who had youth, amiable temper and good looks to recommend her. It did not matter to Emma that Harriet was the natural daughter of somebody who did not care to acknowledge her in public and kept her indefinitely at Mrs. Goddard's without giving the girl any idea of what her future was to be. Emma in her superior position felt a kind of patronising love for Harriet, who, though dull and ignorant, was quite pleasing and deferential in her attitude to Miss Woodhouse. She had no friends except the Martins, the family of her school-friends, who had rented a large farm of Mr. Knightleys. She had recently spent some weeks at the Martins' farm and had liked the family very well. Emma now decided that the Martins and their like would no longer be fit company for Miss Smith after she had taken the girl into her protection. She should make of Harriet her constant companion and thus introduce her to the very best society such as she herself mingled with. Gradually the simple girl should be taught to take to the ways of genteel society and to keep away from the company of her old friends like the Martins.

Chapter 4

Harriet was very soon spending most of her time with Emma who was quite pleased with her docile, grateful disposition. In Harriet Emma found an object of patronage for whom everything was to be done by her. She tried to trace out her parents but as Harriet could give her no useful clues she had to give up the attempt. Her next idea was to find out all about the Martins with whom Harriet had spent a very happy holiday. Though they were excellent people in their own way, Emma soon decided to wean Harriet from associating with these farming folk to whom she was now superior. Already it was evident that she had become rather attracted towards the young gentleman-farmer Robert Martin who admired his sister's pretty friend very much. Emma took great pains to show Harriet the disparity in social status between the esteemed companion

of Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield and Mr. Robert Martin who rented a farm belonging to Miss Woodhouse's brother-in-law, Mr. Knightley. As Emma's friend, Harriet was now moving in the society of gentlemen like Mr. Knightley, Mr. Weston and Mr. Elton and could no longer return to the lower social class in which the Martins moved. Though Harriet was at first reluctant to give up the friends at whose home she had known genuine happiness, she soon submitted to Emma's persuasion and decided to cut herself aloof from the Martins. Emma's match-making mind soon fixed upon Mr. Elton as the most desirable suitor for Harriet and she believed that already Mr. Elton was admiring the beauty of her companion. The attentions of a supperior being like Elton, she knew, would drive out of Harriet's mind all thoughts of her humble admirer Robert Martin.

Chapter 5

Mr. Knightley, as one of the sincerest well-wishers of Emma disapproved of the fast-growing intimacy between her and Miss Smith. He told Mrs. Weston that it could do no good to either Emma or Harriet, that worthy lady contended that the friendship had several advantges. Harriet could really be a pleasant companion, and to make her better informed Emma would be induced to read more. But Mr. Knightley knew that Emma had always been quick and assured and had never cared for any steady reading. Ever since she was twelve she had imposed her will on the rest of the family and now she was imposing it on the dull Harriet by making a companion of her. Mr. Knightley felt that Emma would do the girl positive harm by making her to look down upon her own set and introducing her to her betters who would not accept her. For this reason he wanted Mrs. Weston to discourage the friendship between Harriet and Emma. But Mrs. Weston pointed out that as Emma was allowed by her fond father to have her own way always, there was little that could be done in the matter. So they decided to wait for the arrival of Isabella and John Knightley at Christmas and to have the subject discussed then with them.

As two people who loved Emma most, Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley could not help wondering what would become of her if she were allowed to continue in her carefree, independent state, quite ready to follow the whims of her wayward fancy. She had declared that she did not want to marry, probably because she had not yet found the man who aroused love in her. Mr. Knightley said that Emma in love and in doubt about her love being returned, would be an interesting object of study. Mrs. Weston saw no immediate opportunity of watching Emma in love, though she and Mr. Weston had certain fond hopes of what might happen when Frank Churchill made his promised visit to Highbury.

Chapter 6

Under Emma's benevolent direction Harriet was fast-falling in love with the handsome young vicar of Highbury and both young women believed that a growing love for Harriet was noticeable in the words, looks and behaviour of Mr. Elton. He was frequently in their company at Hartfield and loved to pay handsome compliments to the two young ladies. Emma convinced herself and her companion that the compliments were all meant directly or indirectly for Harriet, who was evidently his object of admiration. One day Emma expressed a wish to have Harriet's picture painted and Mr. Elton's immediate compliance with the wish was regarded by both the young ladies as the best proof of his love for Harriet. Emma produced all the pictures she had so far painted and these were duly admired by Mr. Elton. The last one she had done had been left unfinished because her sister Isabella had observed that it did not do justice to her husband, John Knightley. Emma had thereafter decided not to attempt any picture where husbands or wives were involved. Mr. Elton hastened to remark that in Harriet's case there were no husbands and wives to be considered at the time and hence she could safely make the attempt. This remark was taken by Emma and Harriet as a pointed reference to the husband whom Harriet might soon have. Emma congratulated

herself on her success in bringing her friend and the young Vicar nearer to each other. As Harriet continued to sit for her picture and Emma busied herself with it, Mr. Elton continued to hover in the background with his comments on Emma's success in bringing out the likeness so well. When the picture was completed he insisted on taking it in person to London to get it framed. Emma was prevailed upon to employ him on such an errand, seeing how well he liked it. She did not totally approve of his sighings and languished airs and studied compliments but tried to tolerate them as the eccentricities of a man very much in love with her friend.

Chapter 7

On the very day Mr. Elton left for London. Harriet had gone to Mrs. Goddard's for a few hours after breakfasting with Emma and had then received a small parcel left for her by Robert Martin who had called in her absence. The parcel contained, basides the songs which his sister had borrowed, a short letter addressed to her. It was a very decent proposal of marriage from one who loved her truly and poor Harriet was very much agitated on reading it. She was quite pleased with this expression of love from Robert Martin whom she knew to be a decent fellow. But she was not sure whether it was proper for her to accept his proposal of marriage because of the ideas of superior social status which her constant association with Miss Woodhouse had instilled in her. In a flutter of excitement she returned to Hartfield and laid the whole story before Emma. Emma could not help admitting that Robert Martin had written a letter which did him credit but she did not want Harriet, on account of such a letter, to throw away her chances of making a better match. While professing to leave the matter entirely to the impressionable mind of Harriet, Emma actually influenced her very strongly in rejecting Robert Martin's proposal. She congratulated Harriet on being saved from the prospect of cutting herself away from Hartfield and all decent folk by being married to a mere farmer like Robert Martin. She conjured up a very glowing picture of the way Mr. Elton might already

be speaking of her to his family while on his way to London to have her picture framed. Harriet could not but be pleased at the prospect.

Chapter 8

Emma felt that it was safer for a while to keep Harriet with her as much as possible and sent her on to Mrs. Goddard's to make arrangements for her stopping at Hartfield for some days. When she was gone, Mr. Knightley called and after Mr. Woodhouse had gone for his daily round in the garden, he began speaking with Emma about Harriet. Having praised her good looks and amiable disposition and acknowledged how her manners had been improved by her association with Emma, Mr. Knightley told her that Harriet was soon to receive an offer of marriage from an unexceptionable fellow like Robert Martin. He was greatly shocked and displeased when Emma told him how the offer had already been made and refused. He could not understand what the foolish girl meant by refusing a decent gentleman-farmer like Robert Martin when even her parentage was shrouded in obscurity and she had no social position or good connections to speak of. He blamed Emma for persuading her to refuse Robert Martin in the hope of getting a better match. He warned Emma that if she had ever thought of the possibility of Elton's offering to marry Harriet, she was bound to be disappointed. Elton was too prudent a man to ally himself with a little nobody like Harriet. Emma protested that Mr. Elton was far from her thoughts and that, for the time-being, she only wanted to keep Harriet with her at Hartfield. She was, however, a little worried on hearing Mr. Knightley's views on the kind of marriage which Elton was likely to make. But she consoled herself by thinking that Knightley did not have the advantage of watching Mr. Elton closely in Harriet's company or of judging him by the innumerable attentions he paid to her. When Harriet returned from Mrs. Goddard's she told Emma how Dr. Perry had met Mr. Elton on his way to London and had tried in vain, to dissuade him from undertaking the journey which

took him away from their whist club meeting that evening. But Mr. Elton had excused himself by saying that he was going on a very agreeable mission and was the bearer of something too precious to be left in other hands. To Emma and her friend this was equivalent to an open declaration of his love for Harriet, whose picture he was taking to London to be framed.

Chapter 9

When the picture of Harriet, elegantly framed, had arrived from London and Mr. Elton had sighed out his half sentences of admiration Emma and Harriet were equally pleased. Harriet was at the time engaged in collecting and transcribing as many riddles and charades as she could and Emma asked Mr. Elton to compose one charade of his own for her friend's collection. After protesting that he was too dull and stupid to attempt anything of the kind, Mr. Elton wrote out a charade and brought it to Hartfield on the following day. The word he had chosen was 'courtship' and Emma read in it his desire to court her pretty friend. When he came in the evening to Hartfield again she told him how well his charade was admired by her and Harriet and he said he would consider it a very great honour, with such a conscious air as to convince her all the more of his deep love for her friend.

Chapter 10

The next day Emma and Harriet set out on a charitable visit to a poor sick family near the Vicarage. Passing by the building Harriet expressed a great desire to see the inside of the vicarage, but as Emma could not think of any excuse for going in, they had to continue on their way.

They soon came upon Mr. Elton quite accidentally and Emma tactfully left the Vicar and Harriet to walk together while she hurried forward on some pretext or other. Having reached the Vicarage poles, Emma restored to a clever artifice to take Harriet into the building. She had deliberately broken off part of her shoe-lace and asked Mr. Elton's

permission to borrow some shoe-lace from his housekeeper. While pretending to replace the broken shoe-lace she left Harriet and Mr. Elton together for quite a long time and hoped Mr. Elton would soon come to the point and propose to her friend. But though nothing of the kind happened, Emma flattered herself that both Harriet and Mr. Elton had found the occasion very enjoyable. Mr. Elton probably would not propose till he was sure of being accepted.

Chapter 11 & 12

The arrival of Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley and their five children with a competent number of nursery maids and servants at Hartfield occupied Emma's attention ten days. She had hardly time to think of the progress of the love between the vicar and her friend Harriet. Her father was very happy and excited and he was spending his time mostly with his daughter, Isabella, bewailing Miss Taylor's marriage. He could not get reconciled to the idea of losing dear Miss Taylor. Emma tried to console him by saying that it was not right on their part to stand in the way of Miss Taylor's making such a good marriage, especially when she was staying within half a mile of Hartfield and visiting them daily. Isabella was told what an ideal husband Mr. Weston was. He had a son by his first wife, adopted and brought up by his maternal uncle and named after him as Mr. Churchill. He was a handsome young man of twenty-three and he promised to pay a visit to Randalls soon-after his father's second marriage. But somehow the visit had been postponed and the people of Highbury, who could not satisfy their curiosity regarding the appearance and behaviour of Frank Churchill so far still looked forward to visit as eagerly as the Westons.

Mr. Knightley was to dine at Hartfield on the day of the John Knightley's arrival. Emma had disagreed with him on the occasion of their last meeting and though she still did not agree with him in his views on Harriet's matrimonial prospects, she was glad to be reconciled to him. He agreed to say no more about the subject seeing that Emma, being a pretty young woman and a spoilt child, was

not willing to listen to one who had the advantage of sixteen year's experience of life.

After dinner the brothers were agreeably employed in discussing their own concerns and pursuits while Mr. Woodhouse talked with Isabella about the health of her children. He considered it very unwise to have taken them to a sea-side resort and attributed his own views to his Doctor, Mr. Perry. But Mr. John Knightley put a stop to the discussion by saying that he was the man to decide where his family should spend their holidays and that he did not want the opinion of Dr. Perry or any one else in this matter.

Chapter 13

During this brief stay at Hartfield, Isabella was very happy, visiting old friends and recounting the events of the day to her father and sister every evening. They had almost all their evenings to themselves, except on the 24th of December when they were to dine at Randalls. The only other guests were Mr. Knightley, Mr. Elton and Harriet and they were to be conveyed to Randalls in two carriages—Mr. Woodhouse's and Mr. John Knightley's. On the day before the party Harriet was down with a severe sore throat and fever and Emma thought Mr. Elton would now have no more interest in the party since Harriet was unable to attend. She told him that he could very well be excused from attending the party since they could not allow him to get a sore throat by going out in the extreme cold. When she had almost succeeded in getting Mr. Elton off, her brother-in-law offered to take him also in the carriage, to save him from being exposed to the cold and Mr. Elton most thankfully accepted the offer. Emma could not help being surprised at the young man's eagerness to attend the dinner when his beloved Harriet lay sick at no great distance from Randalls. After Mr. Elton had left Hartfield, Mr. John Knightley pointed out to Emma that the Vicar of Highbury was paying marked attention to her and unless she meant to encourage him, she should regulate her behaviour to him with more care and thoughtfulness.

Emma laughed at the idea saying that she could never be his object of love. She wondered how right thinking man like her brother-in-law could entertain such a wrong idea when it was so evident (according to her) that Elton was in love with Harriet. Having arrived at Randalls she was quite surprised to find that the youngman had quite forgotten the sick Harriet in the expectation of a very pleasant party. He was all the time trying to make himself agreeable, particularly with Emma.

Chapter 14

In the company of her dear Mrs. Weston, Emma wanted to forget Mr. Elton and his oddities, but she could not do this as he came and seated himself next to her at dinner. His happy countenance and solicitous words made her to wonder whether, after all, she could be the object of his love. Though his behaviour had in it everything of the would-be-lover, she banished the idea as highly absurd and tried to listen to Mr. Weston who was saying something about his son.

Mr. Frank Churchill was a young man in whom Emma had felt a lively interest ever since she had heard of his proposed visit to Highbury. Though she had always declared that she would not marry, she felt that if at all she thought of marrying, it would be somebody like the handsome young son of Mr. Weston. She was therefore very pleased when Mr. Weston took the earliest opportunity of informing her that his son was to visit them after a fortnight. Mrs. Weston could not help feeling a little in doubt about his coming since it depended on the caprice of Frank's aunt, Mrs. Churchill who was so very much attached to her adopted son that she never wanted him to leave her for long. She seemed to regard the boy's affection for his father with a kind of jealousy and Frank evidently did not want to displease her by coming to Highbury without her consent.

Chapter 15.

After dinner Mr. Elton continued his attention to Emma and begged her to promise him that she would take

care not to catch the infection in case Harriet's sore throat was infectious. He called upon Mrs. Weston to support him in his solicitude for Emma's saftey, thereby assuming the right of first interest in her. Emma resented this intimate personal interest taken in her affairs by Mr. Elton whom she considered as her friend's admirer. So she put a stop to the conversation by moving on to her sister and becoming engrossed in talking with her. But on the return journey when she was accidentally left alone with Mr. Elton in the carriage till they reached the Vicarage, he continued his unwelcome attention with redoubled vigour. He openly declared his love for her in the most impassioned words. Emma was simply taken aback at his inconstancy and presumption in addressing her thus and she told him plainly that he was being disloyal to her friend Harriet whom he had till then loved. It was now Mr. Elton's turn to be utterly amazed. He protested that he never had paid any attention to Harriet except in her capacity as his dear Emma's friend. He had never for a moment thought of anybody other than Miss Woodhouse and he had been under impression that she had understood him. At this declaration Emma was too over-powered by unpleasant feelings to make any reply and Mr. Elton thought that her silence argued in his favour. When she could speak, she confessed that she had thoroughly misunderstood him and had always looked upon him as Harriet's admirer. She had never consciously encouraged him and she only felt sorry for her friend who had believed herself admired by Mr. Elton. As far as Emma herself was concerned, she had no thoughts of matrimony at the time. This open avowal from each other left Emma and Mr. Elton in a state of deep mortification and anger till they parted very coldly at the vicarage gate.

Chapter 16.

Emma's mind was now in a great turmoil. She had slowly persuaded Harriet into believing that Mr. Elton was deeply in love with her and the poor girl had already fallen in love with him. Mr. Knightley and his brother both had

greater penetration. Mr. Knightley had warned her very early that if she had any thoughts of Mr. Elton marrying Miss Smith she was terribly mistaken. Mr. John Knightley was the first to point out to Emma the marked attention which the Vicar was paying to her. She had been altogether blind and foolish in not having listened to either brother. She found it most provoking that a fellow like Elton should have aspired to enrich himself by marrying Miss Woodhouse, the heiress of Hartfield and should have fancied himself encouraged by her. Emma was quite ashamed of the part she had played in bringing Harriet and Mr. Elton together. She should have been satisfied with talking Harriet out of a marriage with Robert Martin and should not have tried to find a better husband for her.

Fortunately the weather was very bad for a fortnight after Christmas and this saved Emma from the embarrassment of meeting either Mr. Elton or her sick friend, Harriet. She could not help dreading the hour of explanation with Harriet which had to be faced when the weather cleared.

Chapter 17

On the day the John Knightley left Hartfield, Mr. Woodhouse received a note from Mr. Elton saying that he was leaving for Bath to spend a few weeks there with some friends and regretting his inability to take personal leave of Mr. Woodhouse. Mr. Elton's resentment against Emma could not be better expressed than by his civil letter to her father, from which she was pointedly excluded. It was now her unpleasant duty to disillusion Harriet who had been cherishing fond ideas of love for the last six weeks. Emma had to destroy the hopes which she herself had called up and fortunately for her, Harriet bore the news very well, without blaming anybody. She felt that Mr. Elton was too high a man for her and that only her kind and partial friend could have thought that she deserved him. Seeing her humility and artless grief Emma was determined to be humble and discreet and to repress her imagination for the rest of her life. She tried to make amends to Harriet by promoting her comfort as best as she could. She took her

to Hartfield and tried to drive Mr. Elton out of her thoughts by amusing her in various ways. She hoped that the indifference of Mr. Elton on his return to Highbury and the passing of time would cure Harriet of her unrequited love for the vicar, and till Harriet was cured, she had no peace of mind.

Chapter 18

When Mr. Frank Churchill did not turn up at Highbury in January and wrote that he hoped to make the visit by no distant future Mr. and Mrs. Weston as well as their friends were all greatly disappointed. When Emma talked the matter over with Mr. Knightley and blamed the Churchills for not allowing him to come, he pointed out that the youngman could have come if he had wanted. According to him the truth was that living with people who were proud, luxurious and selfish, he cared only for his comforts and not enough for the feelings of others. Mr. Frank Churchill was one who was often seen at the popular pleasure resorts like Bath and Weymouth and if the Churchills allowed him to go where pleasure prompted, they could not prevent his going where duty beckoned. Emma tried to argue for Mr. Frank Churchill saying that the habit of dependence and obedience in which he had been confirmed from childhood would make it impossible for him to override the wishes of the Churchills and make his visit to Randalls. But Mr. Knightley chose to differ from Emma's view on the subject. He could not be brought to think very kindly of young Frank Churchill who did not have the resolution and independence to do his duty by his father. Emma felt this attitude very unusual in Mr. Knightley who was never unjust to the merits of others.

Chapter 19.

Emma and Harriet were walking together one evening and with great difficulty Emma was trying to divert Harriet's attention from thoughts of Mr. Elton. She felt that she could effectively do so by calling on Mrs. and Miss

Bates on their way home. When they reached the apartment where the mother and daughter lived, the talkative Miss Bates soon began speaking of Mr. Elton and his doings at Bath as described in a letter which their neighbour Mr. Cole had from the vicar. From Mr. Elton she passed on to her niece, Miss Fairfax, of whom she was never tried of speaking. It turned out that Jane Fairfax was coming there in a week and Miss Bates was so excited over her coming. Jane's foster-parents, the Campbells, were to go on a visit to their married daughter in Ireland and during their stay in Ireland, Jane was to visit her aunt and grand-mother, as desired by her. From her repeated cross-questioning of Miss Bates, Emma came to the conclusion that Jane was being sent to Highbury as it was not desirable to have her with the Campbells when they stayed in Ireland with the Dixons. Emma's imagination suggested something shady in all this. But she did not want to waste any more time listening to the endless talk of Miss Bates and so she hurried away to Hartfield, with Harriet.

Chapter 20

Jane Fairfax had become an orphan at the age of three when her widowed mother had died of consumption and grief, following the death of her husband Lieut. Fairfax, in action abroad. She would have been left to the care of her poor grandmother and aunt at Highbury but for the fact that a friend of her father, a Colonel Campbell adopted her and undertook to bring her up. She was treated like a daughter by Mr. and Mrs. Campbell and given the same education and training as their own daughter. Colonel Campbell had educated Jane Fairfax so well that she could find the means of respectable subsistence by becoming a governess in any decent family. The Campbells had enabled Jane to have all the accomplishments which made her a well-brought-up lady and these accomplishments coupled with her personal beauty and natural talents made her a very attractive young lady. But Emma somehow could never bring herself to care much for the beautiful and accomplished Miss Fairfax.

The Campbells had wanted her to be improved in health by spending a few months in her native air at Highbury before taking up work as a governess. Accordingly she had arrived in the village and everybody was pleased with her charming person and elegant manners. Emma could not help admiring Jane's elegance and charm and tried to get over her dislike of the young lady when she had invited to Hartfield, Jane and the Bateses. But hard as she tried, she could not quite like Jane who was disgustingly and suspiciously reserved in her words and manners. Being told that she had met Mr. Frank Churchill at Weymouth, Emma asked her about the youngman's appearance and manners. The answers were polite, but very evasive and Emma's dislike of Jane increased because of the caution and reserve with which she spoke of Mr. Frank Churchill.

Chapter 21

Emma was congratulated by Mr. Knightley on the next morning for the very pleasant evening she had managed to give them all. He was happy to note how she had got over her dislike of Miss Fairfax. But here he was disillusioned by Emma who said that she could not like the coldness and reserve which characterised Jane's manner. Mr. Knightley was about to tell her of an interesting bit of news when Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax came in to thank Emma for a fine hind-quarter of park which she had presented to them and to tell her the news that Mr. Elton was soon going to marry a Miss Hawkins of Baths. This was the news which Mr. Knightley also wanted to convey to her, having heard it from Mr. Elton who had written of it. As Mr. Elton had been away only for four weeks it was evident that he had soon got over whatever love he had for Emma and had quickly attached himself to another.

After her visitors had left, Emma was wondering how Harriet would take the news of Mr. Elton's forthcoming marriage. When she was thinking how best she could break the news to the simple-minded Harriet she came in, looking quite agitated. She had been caught in the rain on her way to Hartfield and while taking shelter from the

rain in the best shop in Highbury she had accidentally met with Mr. Robert Martin and his sisters, her one time friends. They had shown a mixture of delicacy and wounded affection in their behaviour to her and Mr. Martin had hurried after her when she left the shop, to tell her of the better way to Hartfield after the rains. She was so overcome with the genuine emotion reflected in Mr. Martin's conduct that the news of Mr. Elton's engagement did not produce the same effect as it would have produced at any other time. Emma was rather pleased at this meeting with the Martins because it had helped to deaden the first shock without retaining any alarming influence and since her growing interest in Mr Elton's marriage soon put Robert Martin out of Harriet's mind. Staying with Emma and moving in her society, Harriet was not likely to encounter the Martins for a long time to come.

Chapter 22 & 23

Mr. Elton returned to Highbury after his engagement with Miss Hawkins and the whole parish considered him very lucky. He had won the charming Miss Augusta Hawkins of Bristol, who had an independent fortune of about ten thousand pounds and had a sister who was very well married to a Mr. Suckling who kept two carriages. This being the sole glory of Miss Hawkins, Emma knew that she could neither boast of nobility of birth nor genteel connections.

While Harriet was continually wavering between thoughts of the Martins and Mr. Elton, she received from her friend, Elizabeth Martin a letter inviting her to Abbey Mill Farm and after long consultation with Emma she decided to accept the invitation. But the whole thing was to be done in such a way as to make the Martins understand that Harriet was only courteously renewing a former acquaintance. She was to be driven in the carriage with Emma, who after leaving her at the Abbey Mill, was to drive farther on and then to return in a few minutes to call for her. This would show to the Martins the relation in

which they now stood to Harriet who belonged to a higher plane.

Harriet was in very low spirits when Emma called for her, to make her visit to the Martins. She had just then seen the trunk addressed to Mr. Elton's hotel at Bath being lifted into the cart which was taken to the coach and she could not banish from her mind the trunk and its direction. It was even worse when she arrived at the Abbey Mill. Just when she and the Martins were shaking off their aloofness and coldness and beginning to feel like old friends, Emma appeared in her carriage and put a stop to the visit. The resentment of the Martins and the suffering of Harriet at the shortness and formality of the visit was felt by Emma who paid a visit to Randalls to get over her own unpleasant sensations.

Having been told by the servant that the master and mistress were gone to Hartfield, Emma was riding away disappointed, when suddenly she found the carriage stopped by Mr. and Mrs. Weston who were returning home. They told her that Frank Churchill was expected on the morrow by about four o'clock in the evening. Mrs. Weston was rather anxious, not being sure how her step-son would react to her and the preparations she had made against his coming. Emma was thinking of her friend as she came down from her room and opened the parlour-door at noon the following day, when she found Mr. Weston and handsome young gentleman in conference with her father. The youngman was none other than Mr. Frank Churchill who had arrived at Randalls the previous evening and had been taken to Hartfield by his father at the earliest opportunity. Emma was very happy to find that he was as handsome as she had expected him to be on the basis of Mr. Weston's remarks about him. He had very agreeable manners and was never tired of praising his step-mother. This only made Emma like him all the better as she loved to hear the praises of her beloved Mrs. Weston. On leaving, Frank Churchill enquired after the house of Miss Jane Fairfax whom he had the opportunity of knowing at Weymouth and his father immediately told him to call on her while he went

on to the Crown about some business. The son was not particular to make the visit that very day. But his father told him that any neglect of Fairfax at Highbury should be avoided as she was living with her poor grand-mother and would therefore feel slighted at any want of attention. Upon this, Mr. Frank Churchill was persuaded to call upon Jane on his way home. Emma felt very happy at being acquainted with the agreeable youngman and looked forward to many happy occasions of meeting him during his fortnight at Highbury.

Chapter 24.

She was quite agreeably surprised when he walked in with Mrs. Weston on the following morning. As they spent the rest of the morning walking about Highbury, he expressed the greatest goodwill not only to Emma and Mrs. Weston but to everything connected with Highbury. His professions were so sincere that Emma could not any longer believe that he had been voluntarily staying away so far, as Mr. Knightley supposed. On passing the Crown Inn he was interested to note the large room which had formerly been used as a dancing room and was at the time accommodating a whist club recently established in the town. Frank Churchill solicited Miss Woodhouse to exert her influence so that they should heve frequent balls at the Crown. He seemed to have all the amiable spirits and social inclinations of his father, which were very pleasing,

As they walked on, Emma enquired how he had found Jane Fairfax on the previous day. He said she looked ill and suffered from a deplorable want of complexion. Emma warmly defended her complexion though she was quite pleased at the indirect compliment paid to her own healthy tint. Further enquiry revealed that Frank Churchill had often met her in the Campbells' circle at Weymouth as he already knew the family. He spoke of Jane's playing music excellently well and Emma agreed. Frank Churchill went on to add that because Miss Fairfax played so well, a certain man who was a lover of music and was engaged to

another lady would never ask that other lady to play if Miss Fairfax could sit down to the instrument. Emma said she knew that the gentleman in question was Mr. Dixon, the man who had married Miss Campbell. If she were in Miss Campbell's position she would not tolerate such conduct on the part of her suitor. She was glad that the Dixons were settled in Ireland where Miss Fairfax would not always be at hand to please Mr. Dixon by playing better than poor Mrs. Dixon. Frank Churchill said that though Mr. Dixon's attentions to Jane were not very flattering to Miss Campbell, she had not seemed to mind them. She could not but point out that Jane herself must have realised the danger and impropriety of placing herself in the position of a rival to her benefactor's daughter. Here Frank Churchill declared that he had no idea how Miss Fairfax felt on this matter and that the relations between her and the Dixons had appeared quite smooth outwardly. Miss Woodhouse, knowing Jane from childhood should be better able to judge Jane's character and conduct. Emma declared that though she had known Jane Fairfax from childhood her reserve had always repelled her and she did not know what the girl really was. She even hinted that a person who was so cautious in her words and manners must have something to conceal.

In all this, Frank Churchill agreed with Emma, who, after walking together with him so long and talking so much alike, felt so well acquainted with him. From the remarks he made about the vicarage building that it was comfortable enough for a man to live in with the woman he loved, she came to the conclusion that Frank Churchill was inclined to give up the comforts of Enscombe so as to have an early establishment of his own.

Chapter 25

Except for the foppery indicated by his going on the next day to London to have his hair cut, Frank Churchill impressed Mrs. Weston and Emma as a very pleasing and sensible youngman. Mr. Weston gave Emma to understand that Frank admired her greatly and this, coupled with the

feeling that he was marked out for her by their joint acquaintance, made Emma pleasantly disposed towards the youngman, though she still had no thoughts of marriage.

Mr. Knightley was the only person in the neighbourhood who did not altogether approve of Frank. He considered it very silly of him to drive all the way to London and back for hair-cut. On the very morning Frank Churchill went to London for his hair-cut. Emma took a momentous decision. She decided, on the advice of Mr. and Mrs. Weston and by her own youthful promptings, to accept the invitation to a party at the Coles's though she still regarded them with an air of condescension.

Chapter 26

When Frank Churchill returned after his hair-cut and laughed at his own folly in an impudent way, Emma could not feel very angry with him, though she could not imagine a sensible, sober-minded man like Mr. Knightley doing anything of the kind. She was happy at the prospect of meeting Frank at the Coles's party on the following Tuesday.

Having left her father in the company of Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Goddard, Emma set out happily for the Coles's party. At the door of the house she was handed out from the carriage by Mr. Knightley who had just stepped out his own. Emma expressed her approbation of his having turned up in his carriage as was proper, especially because he did not always use his carriage. Mr. Knightley was pleased at her remark though he brushed it aside as nonsensical.

At dinner all importance was paid to Emma and she was very pleased. The less worthy ladies were to come in the evening with Miss Bates, Jane Fairfax and Harriet Smith. Before their coming, Mrs. Cole was speaking about a new piano which had been received that evening by Jane Fairfax. It was evidently ordered for her and directed to Highbury by some well-wisher, probably Col. Campbell himself. Jane was puzzled, because there was no mention

of the piano in the Campbells' letters and yet she was pleased because it would help her spend the time happily. This news was sufficient food for Emma's fertile imagination which now began fixing upon the sender of the piano to Jane. In her conversation with Frank Churchill, a little later, she told him that it was her belief that the piano was a present from Mr. and Mrs. Dixon, because Mr. Dixon admired Jane and her music so well. Led on by Emma's arguments Frank Churchill declared that he was convinced that the piano received by Jane was an offering of love from Mr. Dixon.

When Harriet, Jane and the other ladies arrived and Frank Churchill joined them before the other gentlemen he immediately made his way to Emma having complimented Jane and her aunt. As Jane was being questioned by the other ladies about her new piano, Emma noticed how unwilling she was to speak on the subject. Looks of intelligence passed between Emma and Frank Churchill at the behaviour of Jane, in which, Emma believed, she saw consciousness of sin. After talking with the other ladies when Emma returned to Frank Churchill, she found him staring intently at Jane across the room. Her approach startled him and he said he was staring at Jane's strange hair-do. Saying he would go and ask her whether it was an Irish fashion, he moved across to Jane and was talking with her for some minutes. But as he stood between her and Emma, the latter could not see how she reacted to his words. Before Frank returned to Emma she was joined by Mrs. Weston who began talking on a subject of absorbing interest. She started with her accidental discovery that Mr. Knightley had used his carriage that evening for the sake of Jane and Miss Bates particularly. From his little acts of kindness and consideration to Jane, Mrs. Weston had come to believe that Mr. Knightley was interested in her. But Emma could not even imagine such a thing, especially because Knightley's marriage would deprive her nephew of his heritage. But Mrs. Weston calmly pointed out that if Mr. Knightley decided on marrying Jane or anyone else, no one could prevent him, and whether she

approved of it or not, did not matter. Though Emma stoutly refused to admit that there was either probability or propriety in what Mrs. Weston suggested, she watched Mr. Knightley very closely that evening. When he grew indignant at Frank Churchill pressing Jane to continue singing after her voice had grown hoarse, Emma felt sudden pangs of jealousy. But she calmed down when Frank Churchill claimed her for the two dances which followed, while Knightley, instead of dancing with Jane, sat talking to Mrs. Weston.

Chapter 27

The morning after the party at the Coles's, Emma felt uneasy about two things. One was about having expressed her suspicions about Jane Fairfax so freely to Frank Churchill when she found him ready to agree with anything she suggested. She was conscious of thus having transgressed the duty of woman by woman. Her other regret was that Jane sang and played so much better than she did. But while she was grieving over the idleness of her childhood which had prevented her from practising music better, Harriet entered and began praising her performance on the previous evening. She said that Frank Churchill regarded her as having greater taste though Jane had better execution. This pleased her greatly. Harriet went on to add that Miss Cox had spoken very admiringly of Robert Martin who had dined with them that week and had enquired whether she was going to stay with the Martins that summer. Guessing that Harriet was indulging in wistful thoughts of Robert Martin and his proposal and desiring to prevent chance encounters with him, Emma accompanied her to Ford's where she had some shopping to do. Waiting about at the door, she soon saw Mrs. Weston and Frank Churchill approaching Miss Bate's house and preparing to knock. Just then they saw her and immediately approached her. Mrs. Weston said that they were going to hear Jane's practising on her new piano as arranged on the previous evening. Though Frank said he would rather accompany Emma he had to go in and hear the

music as Mrs. Weston wanted him to. Just as Emma and Harriet were getting out of Ford's, Mrs. Weston and Miss Bates approached and entreated them to step in and hear the new piano. On the way Miss Bates talked on about the obliging Frank Churchill who was at the time repairing Mrs. Bates spectacles. She also spoke about the kindness of Mr. Knightley who had sent them his whole store of apples for the use of Jane who relished them.

Chapter 28 & 29

On entering Miss Bates' drawing-room, Emma found Frank Churchill busy with repairing Mrs. Bates' spectacles. He was very pleased to have the pleasure of her company while listening to Jane's music. He praised the piano and the player in pointed terms which implied that he knew who the sender of the gift was. Emma felt half ashamed of his conduct and expressed her regret at having shared with him her secret suspicions about Jane. Through the window of the room they could soon see Mr. Knightley passing by on horse-back. Miss Bates invited him to come in, telling him of the company assembled but he refused to do so saying he had urgent work. Soon after he rode away, Emma and the others left. As it was late Frank and Mrs. Weston had time enough only to accompany the girls to Hartfield gates before returning to Randalls.

On the next occasion when Emma and her father visited the Westons, Frank suggested the idea of a party at which, as at the Coles's, the young people could again have the pleasure of dancing. The rooms at Randalls being too small to accommodate the ten couples, they had in mind, it was decided, after much speculation, that the party should be held at the Crown Inn which had a dancing-room. Frank went to the Bates' house and brought in Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax to give their opinions on the advisability of having the party at the Crown and as they approved heartily of the plan, it was immediately settled.

Chapter 30

The party thus being fixed upon, Emma was worried whether the necessary preparations would be over in time

so as to have the thing before Frank Churchill's visit at Highbury came to an end. She was relieved when the Churchills graciously consented to have his stay prolonged. Emma's next worry was about Mr. Knightley's lack of enthusiasm about the whole scheme. He said that he would not be able to refuse when the Westons invited him to the party, though he would not find any pleasure either in dancing or standing by and watching others dancing. Jane Fairfax, like Emma, was very enthusiastic about the party and eagerly looked forward to it.

A letter from Mr. Churchill saying that Mrs. Churchill was dangerously ill made it inevitable that Frank should leave Highbury within a few hours. This meant the overthrow of the delightful plans for the party at the Crown. Soonafter receiving his uncle's note, Frank arrived at Hartfield to take leave of Emma. He expressed the greatest regret at having to go away so unexpectedly and made Emma promise that they would have the party when he came next to Highbury. Emma suggested that he should call at Miss Bate's house and bid goodbye but he said he had already done so on his way to Hartfield. After a pause he seemed to be on the point of declaring his love for Emma, but before he could finish, his father appeared to take him back and set him on his way in time. After his leave-taking, Emma was so listless and sad that she felt she must be falling in love with Frank who had nearly declared his love for her.

Mr. Knightley was sorry for the disappointment which Emma felt at the postponement of the party, but otherwise he did not care whether Frank Churchill went or stayed. When Emma saw Jane some days later she too seemed indifferent about the party and Emma attributed it to the prolonged illness she was suffering from, since the day Frank Churchill left.

Chapter 31

After Frank Churchill's leaving Emma continued to think of herself as being a little in love with him. But she

was not more deeply involved than to be able to refuse him when he came to propose, if at all he did so. She was sufficiently interested in the youngman to want to know how he was faring and when he would be coming again to Highbury. When Mrs. Weston received Frank's letter, Emma was invited to read it and she had the satisfaction of finding her name mentioned with due warmth in many places. Frank begged pardon for not having had time to take leave of Emma's beautiful little friend, Harriet. This set Emma thinking that when she parted with Frank it would be a nice thing for him and Harriet if he could transfer his affections to her "beautiful little friend."

Poor Harriet was at the time much excited over the fast approaching marriage of Mr. Elton and the prospect of his bringing his bride to Highbury soonafter the marriage. The girl was feeling quite miserable over the affair till Emma pointed out to her that by grieving over Elton's marriage in this way she was actually giving much pain to Emma who had brought Elton into her thoughts. At this Harriet was deeply affected because she was so genuinely fond of Emma and never would cause her pain. This tenderness of heart on Harriet's side was so much admired by her friend who felt that the possession of it made the silly girl infinitely more charming to a man than she herself could ever be.

Chapter 32

Soonafter Mrs. Elton made her appearance at church, Emma called on her in the company of Harriet because she wanted the ordeal to be over soon and was eager to see what the bride was like. The shortness of the visit and the embarrassment of the parties made it difficult for Emma to form any clear idea of Mrs. Elton. When the visit was returned, Harriet being away and Mr. Woodhouse being engaged in conversation with Elton, Emma had Mrs. Elton all to herself. The conversation and manners of the lady showed her to be ignorant and vulgar and sadly lacking in good breeding. All her talk was of her rich brother-in-law,

Mr. Suckling, whose seat, Maple Grove, she said, was very much like Hartfield. After telling Emma about the proposed visit of her brother-in-law and sister and of her plans for exploring the country in Mr. Suckling's barouche-landau, she advised Emma to go to Bath for the summer. She even went to the extent of offering to secure for Emma an introduction to the best society in Bath. With great difficulty Emma restrained herself from uttering the reproofs which Mrs. Elton's presumption deserved and changed the subject of the conversation. It was agreed that with the very musical society which Highbury boasted of, they should soon have weekly musical evenings at Mrs. Elton's house or at Hartfield. Mrs. Elton next went on to say how they had called at Randalls and had found Mr Weston very agreeable and Mrs. Weston very ladylike. This was a matter of surprise to Mrs. Elton who did not expect so much good breeding and elegance in one who had been a governess. They were happy to meet Knightley who had called while the Eltons were still at Randalls. Emma winced to hear Mrs. Elton referring familiarly to her old friend as Knightley and expressing her opinion that he was a gentleman,

"Insufferable woman," was the verdict which Emma pronounced on Mrs. Elton as soon as she and her husband had left. But the ever amiable Mr. Woodhouse considered her a charming young woman to whom all courtesy was to be shown, especially in her capacity as a bride. Emma who could not agree with her father's opinion of Mrs. Elton could not help dwelling long upon her offences.

Chapter 33

At her repeated meetings with Mrs. Elton, Emma still found her as self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant and ill-bred as she was at her first meeting. Mr. Elton apparently was proud of his wife whom even Miss Woodhouse could not equal in his estimation. While the simple inhabitants of Highbury, following Miss Bates' lead, considered her as clever and agreeable as she professed to

be, Emma disliked her more and more because of the secret enmity which Mrs. Elton felt for her and which she expressed in contemptous treatment of Harriet.

Mrs. Elton had taken a great fancy of Jane Fairfax and tried to impress upon Emma the necessity of placing Jane in such a situation as would give full expression to her talents in music. She said that she and Emma could join together in raising the social status of Jane Fairfax by constantly inviting her to their houses and allowing her to use their carriages. But as Emma did not enthusiastically support these proposals she soon made Jane Fairfax her particular protegee. Emma could hardly understand how Jane Fairfax who had known better company, could tolerate the insufferable Mrs. Elton for long. When she spoke of the matter to her friends, Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley, both had their explanations for Jane's conduct. Jane who was condemned to the boring Miss Bates' company at home, might consider even Mrs. Elton's company preferable. According to Mr. Knightley, Jane was probably treated better by Mrs. Elton than they gave her credit for. Emma was a little piqued by hearing Mr. Knightley declare that he thought very highly of Miss Fairfax. When she teased him by pointing out that one day his admiration for Jane may take him by surprise, Mr. Knightley replied that he had no ideas of proposing marriage to her, if that was what Emma meant. He went on to add that though Jane had many pleasing qualities, she was too reserved for his taste and he could never think of marrying a person who did not have an open temper. After he had left, Emma expressed satisfaction at this, but Mrs. Weston said that when Mr. Knightley was so occupied with the idea of not being in love with Miss Fairfax he may end up by being in love with her.

Chapter 34

As everybody in Highbury was inviting the newly married vicar and his bride for dinner-parties, card-parties or tea-parties, Emma was obliged to invite them to Hartfield for dinner. On the appointed day Mr. John Knightley

arrived with his two boys and took the place at table, instead of Mr. Weston who was called away on business. The other guests were Mr. Knightley, Jane Fairfax and Mrs. Weston. Though Mrs. Elton was as insufferable as on other occasions, the evening turned out to be pleasant, especially because Mrs. John Knightley was in unusual good humour. He courteously addressed himself to Jane Fairfax, teasing her good humouredly about going in the rain to fetch her letters from the post-office and saying that at her time of life, letters must be quite interesting and precious. She replied that she went to get her letters from the post-office as it provided a daily excuse for going out and gave her wholesome exercise. On hearing how Mr. Knightley and his children had seen her going in the rain to the post-office that morning Mrs. Elton turned in righteous indignation to Jane. She insisted that her servant should be allowed to fetch Jane's letters from the post-office in future but Jane would not give up the pleasure of going out every morning to the post-office. This roused Emma's suspicions about Jane's being anxious to receive in person certain letters, which evidently came from Mr. Dixon, her secret admirer. But disguising her true feelings, Emma behaved in the most amiable manner to Miss Fairfax and took care not to betray her suspicions.

Chapter 35

After the dinner, when the ladies returned to the drawing-room, Mrs. Elton immediately monopolised Jane Fairfax, keeping her engaged in endless conversation, first about the danger of catching cold by going to the post-office every morning and then about the desirability of looking for a governess' post in a respectable family as soon as possible. Jane tried to dissuade her from making any enquiries on her behalf, but she would not listen to the girl's remonstrances. She left Jane only when Mr. Woodhouse joined the ladies. She was quite pleased with the gallant attention which the courteous old man paid to her. By the time the other men also joined the ladies, Mr. Weston arrived, having walked up from Randalls after his dinner. Having given them the

account of his visit to London he handed over to his wife a letter from his son, which he had already read. The letter conveyed the news of Frank's uncle and aunt moving into town the following week. This would give Frank Churchill opportunities of spending half his time at Highbury which was so close to London. Taking it for granted that everybody was interested to know of Frank's coming Mr. Weston, having told the news to Mr. Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse, would have told Jane Fairfax, had she not been deeply engrossed in talking with John Knightley. So he approached Mrs. Elton with the good news.

Chapter 36

Mrs. Elton professed great interest in Frank Churchill and declared that she and the Vicar would call on him at the earliest opportunity and would have great pleasure in seeing him at the Vicarage. Mr. Weston loved to talk of his son, who, as he modestly assured Mrs. Elton, was no prodigy, though his account of him implied as much. From the subject of Frank Churchill, Mr. Weston proceeded to the great wealth and social standing of the Churchills, airing his views on Mrs. Churchill's arrogance and pride and her pretended illness. As he talked of the Churchills Mrs. Elton went on speaking in the same key about her sister and brother-in-law, the Sucklings of "Maple Grove." They were interrupted by the serving of tea and after that Mr. and Mrs. Weston, Mr. Elton and Mr. Woodhouse sat down to cards. Of the remaining five the conversation was mostly between Emma and John Knightley, the latter wondering whether Emma would have time to look after her nephews with her increased social engagements. Mr. Knightley proposed that when Emma was too busy with her visits or parties she must send the little boys to Donwell. But Emma teased him by saying that he would have for less time for his nephews than she had and that he was in no way better suited to take care of little boys. Before Mr. Knightley could reply with some genial remark, Mrs. Elton began speaking to him and he was silent.

Chapter 37

Emma felt some agitation at the news of Frank Churchill's coming. She had long got over what little attachment she had for him and she must now take care not to have her own affection entangled again and not to give him any encouragement. Some days later than he was expected Frank Churchill appeared in Highbury to spend two hours there. Though he called on Emma soon after arriving at Randalls she saw that his love for her was very much cooled. His Aunt was evidently too sick to be separated from him for long. But after some days, according to the advice of her doctor, she was to be removed to Richmond which was only nine miles from Highbury. This meant that Frank could be at Highbury whenever he wished, as the ride was a short one. He could also spend a whole day with them at the shortest notice. So it was soon decided that they should fix a date for ball which had been indefinitely postponed because of Frank's absence. A day in May was fixed and Mr. Woodhouse was resigned to the prospect of spending the evening at Hartfield with Mrs. Bates and his two grandchildren while Emma went to the ball at the Crown.

Chapter 38

On the day fixed for the ball at the Crown, Frank Churchill reached Randalls before dinner and there was no more uncertainty regarding the long-awaited event. Emma arrived at the Crown with Harriet, immediately after the Westons, to help them with the preparatory inspection of the arrangements. She soon discovered that about half the number of the guests had been similarly requested by the Westons to come early and so, long before the ball, there were many of them walking about or sitting around the fire. Frank Churchill was mostly standing by Emma, though there was a certain restlessness about him. It was announced that Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax would be coming soon with the Eltons. When the sound of a carriage was heard, Frank Churchill rushed forward expressing his

eagerness to see Mrs. Elton of whom he had heard so much. However he stopped short, saying he was not yet introduced to Mrs. Elton. The Eltons had arrived without Miss Bates and Jane and Mr. Weston was told that the carriage had been sent for them. In a few minutes they arrived and Frank Churchill hastened to welcome them carrying umbrellas as rain was beginning to fall. Mrs. Bates went on talking ceaselessly as coffee was handed around and Frank came and stood by Emma. She could over-hear Mrs. Elton complimenting Jane on her dress and appearance and being quietly complimented by her. Mrs. Elton went on to praise Frank as a fine young man and was bent upon testing his dancing abilities.

To the great disappointment of Emma, Mr. and Mrs. Weston felt that Mrs. Elton being newly married should be asked to begin the ball especially as she seemed to expect it. This was enough to make Emma wish to marry soon but she could not show her feelings. As Frank had already engaged Emma for the first dance Mr. Weston was Mrs. Elton's partner. Just before the last two dances before supper Harriet Smith was obliged to sit down without a partner while Mr. Elton was moving about idly in the sight of everyone. When Mrs. Weston asked him to dance like the rest he said he would, provided Mrs. Weston or Mrs. Gilbert became his partner. Mrs. Weston told him to ask Harriet who was sitting down without a partner. This he rudely refused and his wife was smiling at him in approval as she danced. Mr. Knightley who was standing aloof without dancing now came forward and taking the humiliated Harriet as his partner, joined the dancers. Emma was very grateful to him for this kind gesture and as soon as supper was over she found the opportunity to thank him. As the sets were again forming Mr. Knightley wondered with whom Emma was going to dance. She said she would dance with him if he asked her. With evident pleasure Knightley now led off Emma to dance.

Chapter 39

Emma was very happy on the next morning on recalling how the events of the previous evening had enabled her and

Mr. Knightley to agree in their views of the Eltons. She was equally happy to discover that the rude behaviour of the Eltons had cured Harriet of the love she had entertained for Mr. Elton. She was relieved to notice that Frank Churchill was not too much in love with her, as she had no intention of marrying him.

Frank had announced his intention of leaving that very noon and so Emma was quite surprised to see him entering the gates of Hartfield with Harriet leaning on his arm, pale and frightened. The girl fainted away after entering the hall and Frank explained how he had come upon her. Harriet and another boarder at Goddard's were walking out that morning when they came to a rather retired part of the road where they were confronted by a party of gypsies. Harriet's companion screamed and fled, but Harriet, with limbs cramped from dancing, could not follow. She was surrounded by the gypsies when tried to pacify by giving money. Seeing her terror they grew more demanding while the poor girl almost fainted from fright. It was then that Frank Churchill suddenly appeared on the road. He had sent his horses forward and was walking part of the way, the morning being fine. At his sight the gypsies fled and Harriet clung to him and desired to be brought to Hartfied. Having told his story and seen the lady recovered, Frank now hastened on his way.

The romantic circumstances in which Frank and Harriet were brought together and the fact that Harriet was just cured of her love for Elton while Frank was evidently trying to get the better of his love for Emma, made Emma to think that they were in most favourable conditions to fall in love with each other. Being an 'imaginist' she now began to visualise the growth of a love between the young man and the young woman whom he had rescued from assault. She felt that Frank had spoken with great warmth while describing the helpless way Harriet had clung to him and in expressing his indignation at the conduct of her companion. But though she wished to see the growth of love between the two young people, she did not want to interfere in promoting it, for fear of making mistakes.

Though the gypsies had already left Highbury, the account of Harriet's adventure, soon known to the whole neighbourhood occasioned some panic, especially to Mr. Woodhouse. It also provided much harmless entertainment for Emma's nephews who were at Hartfield.

Chapter 40

A few days later Harriet approached Emma with a small parcel, saying she had a confession to make. It turned out that the parcel contained a bit of court plaster which had been handled by Mr. Elton in the early days of their acquaintance and she had kept it as a great relic of her love for him. Now that she had got the better of her infatuation she wanted to destroy the plaster and the stump of an old pencil used by Mr. Elton in noting down something at Hartfield, which she had preserved. Having consigned there articles to the fire the simple girl told Emma that she would never marry. This did not surprise Emma who had already thought of Harriet's possible love for Frank Churchill, who was so much her social superior that marriage was out of the question. She told Harriet the service he had rendered was so very great as to warm anybody's heart. Raising her thought to such a superior being would raise and refine her mind and there was no telling whether, after all, she would be able to marry him. Harriet felt so grateful at Emma's kind words.

Chapter 41

In the two months which followed nothing important happened in Highbury. The Eltons were still talking of a visit from Sucklings and Jane Fairfax was waiting the Campbells' return from Ireland. While all of their friends were devoting the handsome Frank Churchill to Emma, she was secretly making him over to Harriet. Meanwhile Mr. Knightley suspected him of some secret relationship with Jane Fairfax and noticed signs of intelligence between them. Hence he believed Frank to be guilty of double-dealing in his persuit of Emma and this made him dislike the young

man. Soon something happened to confirm his suspicions about Frank Churchill. He was going out for a walk with Emma and Harriet when they met Mr. and Mrs. Weston, Frank, Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax who were also out on walking. At the end of the walk they were all invited in for tea. As they turned into Hartfield, Mr. Perry, the local doctor, rode past and Frank enquired of Mrs. Weston what had become of Perry's setting up his carriage. Mrs. Weston had no idea of such a thing though Frank protested that she had written about it in one of her letters to him. As both Mr. and Mrs. Weston had no idea of the thing Frank declared that he must have dreamt about it. Miss Bates now joined the conversation by saying that there had been some talk of Mr. Perry's setting up his carriage though it was known only to her family and the Coles at the time. Frank Churchill looked a little confused and Mr. Knightley could not know what Jane Fairfax's reaction was, as she was far behind and busy with her shawl. On entering the house, after tea, they sat down to a game of making out words with a box of alphabets. Frank Churchill placed before Jane Fairfax, the word blunder and she pushed it away with a faint smile. Later on Emma was given a word to puzzle out and the same word was passed on to Jane inspite of Emma's protest. Mr. Knightley who was watching the whole thing saw that Jane was angry and that the word was Dixon. Miss Fairfax soon left with her aunt and Knightley left alone with Emma, wondered whether there was some attachment between Jane and Frank. But Emma protested that there was absolutely no love between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. As she began to ask him for particulars of his suspicious concerning Jane and Frank, Mr. Knightley took a hasty farewell of her.

Chapter 42

The much-talked of visit of the Sucklings to Highbury being postponed till autumn it was planned that the picnic to Box Hill which was to be made in their company should not be postponed. Though Emma could not approve of the largeness of the party, she had to join in with the rest. But

the picnic had to be postponed further because Mrs. Elton's carriage-horse became lame. Meanwhile, finding her so restless and disappointed Mr. Knightley suggested that they could have a small picnic to Donwell Abbey where the strawberries were ripening fast. Mrs. Elton immediately began directing Mr. Knightley regarding the way the whole thing was to be conducted. She asked him to leave all the invitations to her. But Knightley told her that though he would expect her to bring Elton with her, he would not trouble her to make invitations on his behalf. On being pressed he declared that only Mrs. Knightley would ever be allowed to invite anyone she liked to Donwell Abbey. Jane and her aunt, Emma and her father and the Westons and Frank Churchill were invited by Mr. Knightley and they had a very pleasant time gathering straw-berries and eating nice cold meat inside the house. While they were sitting under the delightful shade of the trees, Emma heard Mrs. Elton telling Jane of a very delightful situation which she had managed to procure for her in the house of one Mrs. Bragge. Jane protested that she did not want any situation immediately but Mrs. Elton was not to be put off. Emma found great pleasure in examining critically the buildings and grounds of Donwell Abbey which would one day be inherited by her nephew. After the splendid meal served in the house the party again began strolling over the grounds. Walking into the hall for a better observation of the entrance, Emma came upon Jane Fairfax who appeared fluttered and told her that she was going home immediately. She wanted to tell her aunt that she had returned home as it was late. Emma kindly offered to call her carriage but Jane declined the offer saying she would find great comfort in being left to herself.

Soon after Jane's leaving, Frank Churchill came in and he was evidently quite out of humour. He said that he was delayed by a sudden illness of her aunt. He had met one of their party going home. There was not probably much point in his coming so late, in the oppressive heat, only to see the party breaking up. He was calmer after taking some refreshments as advised by Emma. But sitting

down by her and Mr. Woodhouse, Frank went to say that he was a very miserable fellow, thwarted and crossed in everything he desired. When Emma suggested that he should join the expedition to Box Hill next morning, he seemed at first reluctant, but just before leaving, he told her he would join the party.

Chapter 43

The expedition to Box Hill was not as successful or pleasant as had been expected, especially for Emma. From the first there was some kind of disharmony in the party as was evident from the way they broke up into small groups and kept away from one an other most of the time. The Eltons walked together while Frank always kept by the side of Emma and Harriet and Mr. Knightley took charge of Miss Bates and Jane. Mr. Weston tried in vain to make the groups harmonise better. Emma, feeling quite dull, tried to amuse herself by flirting rather shamelessly with Frank Churchill who flattered her all the time with words of evident admiration. He told her to choose a wife for him and teach her to be like herself. Emma thought of Harriet immediately. With great gallantry he required the rest of the party to entertain Miss Woodhouse by saying one witty thing each or by saying three dull things. Poor Miss Bates admitted that she would be sure to say at least three dull things every-time she opened her mouth to speak. Then Emma, with mock seriousness told her that she should limit herself to three dull things and the simple woman was very much pained by the remark. It was quite unbecoming and heartless of Emma to insult the poor, simple woman in this way and it was felt to be so by everyone present though no one said so. However, as they were getting ready to go home, Mr. Knightley quitely approached Emma and severely upbraided her for her cruelty to Miss Bates. He pointed out that he was her true friend, he thought it his duty to tell her that she had behaved badly. Emma was stung to the quick by his reproof. She realised how very thoughtlessly she had given pain to the poor creature who had generously refrained from blaming her for her behaviour.

She was so overcome with shame at her own conduct that she could hardly speak for some minutes. Before she found her voice, Mr. Knightley had handed her into the carriage and had quickly walked off. Emma, alone in the carriage with Harriet, found the tears running down her cheeks as she felt quite mortified at her conduct towards Miss Bates and also at her inability to express her repentance to the true friend who had so justly upbraided her.

Chapter 44

Emma was so truely sorry for her conduct that she decided to make amends for her treatment of Miss Bates by calling upon her early next morning and treating her with great warmth and consideration in future. As she was announced there was some bustle and stir in the room and Jane escaped into the adjoining room with her aunt who was telling her that she would tell Miss Woodhouse that her niece was laid up and could not meet her. Soon after Emma was seated Miss Bates entered and told her how very tired her poor Jane was after deciding suddenly to accept the excellent situation as governess in the Smallridge family arranged by Mrs. Elton in writing so many letters that morning. From Miss Bates' talk, Emma understood that till the previous evening Jane had no intention of accepting the situation. But her mind was made up during the Box Hill expedition and before leaving for home she had closed with Mrs. Elton's offer. Now after writing letters to the Campbells and the Dixons she was overcome, especially at the thought of her imminent departure from Highbury. Miss Bates' disjointed conversation made Emma realise that soon after the Box Hill party, a message had arrived from Mrs. Churchill requiring Frank Churchill's return to Richmond next morning. Frank had dutifully left that very evening. Emma remained silent along, while contrasting the fortunes of poor Jane Fairfax and the rich Mrs. Churchill, her eyes being unseemingly fixed on the pianoforte presented by the Campbells or the Dixons to Jane. Then Miss Bates told her that Jane was speaking of disposing of the pianoforte when the Campbells returned from Ireland.

Feeling extremely sorry for the unkind thoughts she had entertained regarding Jane in the past and expressing her sincere good wishes to the aunt and niece Emma now returned to Hartfield.

Chapter 45

At Hartfield she found Mr. Knightley and Harriet who had arrived during her absence. At sight of her, Mr. Knightley who was talking with Mr. Woodhouse got up and told her that he was soon going to London to spend a few days with his brother and wife. If Emma had anything to be sent to Isabella he was ready to take it. Even after she told him she had nothing to send, he stood a little while ready to go, but not going and then Mr. Woodhouse told him how Emma had been so kindly calling on Miss Bates and Jane that morning. Emma was warmly gratified to note the look of approval on Mr. Khightley's face and by the loving way in which he took her hand, almost carrying it to his lips. The action was so sudden but so simple and pleasing. Next moment he had left them and Emma was quite happy to note that he had forgiven her for her rudeness to Miss Bates and they were warm friends as before.

The following day brought news from Richmond of Mrs. Churchill's death. After feeling compassion for the bereaved husband, Emma could not help thinking of the benefits which the event would bring to Frank Churchill. Now he would be free to marry a person like Harriet Smith if he was minded. But she did not voice her opinions to Harriet who seemed to behave with great self-command on hearing the news.

As there was nothing she could do for Harriet's happiness at the time except to hope and wish for the best, Emma now turned her attention to Jane Fairfax who was evidently in a very unhappy state. She tried to call on her with the intention of taking her out in the carriage for an airing, but the offer was very politely refused by Miss Bates on the ground that Jane was too unwell to go out. Repeated attempts to see Jane were also in vain. Miss Bates

informed Emma that Jane was too unwell to see anybody. Dr. Perry also confirmed this statement. Hearing of Jane's lack of appetite, Emma sent her some choice arrowroot which was promptly returned with a note saying that Jane could not take it. Putting everything together, Emma concluded that Jane was determined not to receive any kindness from her. She sincerely regretted the irritation of spirits which Jane suffered from as it made her so unwilling to receive any kindness from a well-meaning neighbour.

Chapter 46

Some ten days after Mrs. Churchill's death, Mr. Weston appeared at Hartfield in great agitation, to request Emma to meet his wife at Randalls as soon as possible, on a very important business. Emma, telling her father that she was going for her morning walk, immediately accompanied him. No questioning could induce Mr. Weston to tell her what the matter was. Arrived at Randalls, he left her with Mrs. Weston, saying he would keep within call. Mrs. Weston who seemed to be in a very agitated mood asked Emma whether she had any idea of the news which was going to be broken to her. Emma could only guess that it vaguely related to Frank Churchill as Mr. Weston had assured her that it did not concern her own family. Mrs. Weston now told her that Frank had been with them that morning for a few minutes and that he had come to break the news of his secret engagement to Jane Fairfax since their meeting at Weymouth. Both Mr. and Mrs. Weston were terribly shocked at this because his former conduct had led everyone to believe that he cared only for Emma herself. They were afraid that his conduct might have led Emma to form an attachment, which, in the circumstances would be most unfortunate. They could neither justify nor excuse his conduct to Emma whom they loved so much and hence their agitation could not be controlled. Emma immediately relieved poor Mrs. Weston of all anxiety on her account declaring that she did not then have any kind of attachment towards Frank Churchill though sometime ago she had fancied herself, a little in love with him. But she

considered his conduct towards her quite inexcusable. She could understand how Jane Fairfax who was made to witness his flirting shamelessly with her, had wanted to break with him and take up the post of governess to Mrs. Smallridge's children. This sudden decision of Jane Fairfax had been communicated to him only on the previous day and then he had decided to break the news of his engagement to his uncle and parents. His uncle had made no objections to the alliance and his parents had objected to it only on the ground of his having probably led Emma into loving him. Now that they were assured of her indifference to him, they did not object to the marriage between Frank and Jane. Like Emma, Mrs. Weston too disapproved of Frank's questionable conduct after his secret engagement. But as Frank had promised to explain everything in a letter he was to write them soon, she did not want to condemn him outright.

Chapter 47

Emma was greatly disappointed at this news of Frank's engagement to Jane Fairfax since she had formed plans of getting him married to Harriet, especially after he had asked her to find wife for him. She was so sorry that for a second time, Harriet was made the dupe of her misconceptions and flattery. Commonsense, which, she felt, she lacked very much, must have made her to dissuade Harriet from entertaining any love for Frank. Instead she had only encouraged her. Emma's surprise knew no bounds when on her talking with Harriet on the subject of Frank's engagement it transpired that Harriet had become attached, not to Frank Churchill, as Emma supposed, but to Mr. Knightley. Harriet even went to the extent of believing herself loved by Mr. Knightley. At these words of Harriet, it darted through Emma with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself. As Harriet went on enumerating her reasons for believing that Mr. Knightley cared for her, Emma found herself more and more unable to control the agitation of her heart. The possiblity of losing Mr. Knightley to another woman had

thrown open the flood-gates of her own love for him which hitherto had remained unrealised by her. Till now she had never known how much of her happiness depended on being first with Mr. Knightley as she had always been first in interest and affection. Now she felt sorry that she had taught Harriet Smith to have the presumption to elevate her thoughts to Mr. Knightley instead of being content to marry a man of her own class like Robert Martin. If Harriet had grown vain and presumptuous, it was all Emma's own doing. In her misery Emma could only exclaim, "Oh! God! that I had never seen her."

Chapter 48

Emma now reflected that inspite of her having been often negligent, and perversely opposed to him she was always first in the esteem and affections of Mr. Knightley for so many years. He had watched over her from a girl, with an endeavour to improve her and an anxiety for her doing right always, which no other person had at all shared. Inspite of all her faults he had always loved her. Now she could not help wishing ardently that Harriet might be disappointed in her hopes and expectations regarding Mr. Knightley. She was not particular to marry him. She only wanted him to continue the same old Mr. Knightley to her and her father. Though she had no authority for opposing Harriet's confidence, Emma resolved not to be convinced of Mr. Knightley's love for Harriet as long as she could doubt it. Meanwhile she wrote to Harriet that it would be best that they should not meet each other till Mr. Knightley returned to Highbury. Then Emma was to see for herself how Harriet stood with him.

Emma's thoughts of Mr. Knightley were interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Weston who was on her way home after visiting her would-be daughter-in-law. She had found Jane so very nice and pleasing and so full of regret for having kept her engagement concealed so long. Mrs. Weston knowing the peculiarities of Jane's situation readily forgave her and so did Emma. Emma regretted her thoughtless flirtations with Frank, remembering how it must have

pained Jane. She was so sorry that she had voiced her abominable suspicions of an improper attachment between Jane and Mr. Dixon. Frank Churchill must have told Jane what Emma thought of her and this was the reason why she refused to accept kindnesses from her.

In the dull and lonely evening, as she sat by her father, Emma thought of similar occasions when Mr. Knightley had walked in and cheered them by his friendly conversation. It seemed that very soon she would be forsaken by her old friends including Mr. Knightley. The child to be born at Randalls soon would claim the attentions of both Mr. and Mrs. Weston and Jane Fairfax would soon go away with her husband. If Knightley too were to be claimed by Harriet, dull would be Emma's world in future! The very thought of such a possibility made Emma so restless and agitated.

Chapter 49

The next afternoon, the weather having cleared after a storm, Emma was walking in the garden when she saw Mr. Knightley coming towards her. He had been riding in the rain from London, having received news of Frank Churchill's engagement and being filled with anxiety regarding Emma's reaction to the event. After the Box Hill party, he believed that Emma really cared for Frank Churchill and now he had come to offer her the consolations of a true friend. But a few minutes' conversation with Emma convinced Mr Knightley that she had never really cared for Frank Churchill. Finding her affections disengaged, he could not help asking whether he would be allowed to speak of something which was nearest to his heart. Emma, thinking that he wes going to speak about his love for Harriet, told him not to commit himself. He was evidently very much distressed at this and so Emma encouraged him to speak on. Thus permitted, he spoke of the deep love he had always cherished for his dearest Emma and enquired whether she would return it at some future date, at least. Emma was overjoyed at this and she lost

no time in letting him know that her heart was already his. She could not help feeling sorry for Harriet who had deluded herself into believing that Mr. Knightley loved her when he had only been kind and generous to a poor creature.

Chapter 50-51

After the first flutter of happiness occasioned by Mr. Knightley's avowal of love, Emma's thought was how best to ensure the happiness of her father and Harriet while she married Mr. Knightley. She decided never to leave her father as long as he lived. As for Harriet she felt it would be better to send her out of Highbury for a while by causing her to be invited to spend a few days with Isabella's family in London. The news regarding Mr. Knightley's proposal was conveyed in a letter Emma wrote to her friend. That very day after Mr. Knightley had called at Hartfield and had breakfasted with them and spent some sweet hours with his Emma, she received the explanatory letter from Frank Churchill sent on by his solicitous step-mother so that Emma may not judge him too harshly. It was a very long letter and having read it, Emma was convinced of Frank Churchill's gratitude to Mrs. Weston, his love for Jane Fairfax and his admiration and respect for herself. Being already in love, she was disposed to view the story of his love more kindly than before. But when she made Mr. Knightley to read the letter, he was not disposed to excuse the conduct of Frank Churchill so readily. Mr. Knightley valued very much the beauty of truth and sincerity in human dealings and he could not forgive the dishonesty and the flirtations of Frank Churchill.

He set Emma's heart at rest regarding all anxiety on account of Mr. Woodhouse by saying that after marriage he would come and live at Hartfield instead of causing inconvenience to the old gentleman by asking him to move to Donwell with Emma. Emma's anxiety on account of Harriet, was considerably lessened by the thought that in course of time Mr. Knightley would be supplanted in her affections by another. Time alone was needed to bring about this.

Chapter 52

Emma was relieved to find that Harriet agreed to the idea of spending sometime with the John Knightley in London. When she was out of Highbury, Emma could enjoy Mr. Knightley's visits better. She soon called on Jane Fairfax who heartily welcomed her. Mrs. Elton was already there and she made a great parade of her being in the secret of Jane's engagement while Emma pretended to be ignorant of any such knowledge. Mrs. Elton said that she would soon be joined by Mr. Elton. She whispered to Jane that he was making a congratulatory visit. He took a long time to make his appearance, having had to walk to Donwell to see Mr. Knightley. Mr. Knightley, however, was not at home and his servants had no idea where he had gone. Emma knew that he would probably be waiting for her at Hartfield and so she took leave of Jane. Jane followed her to the door and expressed her gratitude for Emma's kind visit after all the coldness which Jane had shown her recently. Emma very generously declared that they should forgive each other and made kind enquiries regarding the proposed date of the wedding. She was informed that it would take place only three months later as they were in mourning for Mrs. Churchill.

Chapter 53

Mrs. Weston was soon the happy mother of a sweet little girl such as she and her husband had all long wished for. When she was informed of the birth of the child, Emma, remarked that Mrs. Weston's teaching powers should now be usefully exercised again. Considering that Mrs. Weston had Emma to practise on, her daughter ought to do very well. Mr. Knightley added that Mrs. Weston would probably indulge her daughter as much as she had indulged Emma and then believe she did not indulge her at all. Emma replied that inspite of all the indulgence of Mrs. Weston, she could never become spoilt because he was always ready, with reproof and advice, to improve her character. If he promised to do as much for little Miss Weston without falling in love with her, she would grow up into a very good girl indeed.

The news of Mr. Knightley's intended marriage was conveyed in a letter to his brother and both John and Isabella were very happy at the news. John, of course, considered the advantage of the match to be entirely on Emma's side. Emma said she was not surprised at it. Her father, when he came to know of it would think that Mr. Knightley was such a gainer in marrying Emma. Mrs. Weston was charged with the reconciling of Mr. Woodhouse to the idea of Emma's marriage when once she had announced the news to her father. He was at first greatly shocked especially because Emma had always announced her intention of never marrying. But she pointed out that she did not mean to marry and go away with her husband like Isabella and Mrs. Weston. Her marriage would only ensure the constant presence of Mr. Knightley at Hartfield and this would be very pleasing to Mr. Woodhouse who liked him and depended on him in his business matters. Thus by constantly dwelling on the advantages of a marriage between Emma and Mr. Knightley, Mrs. Weston got Mr. Woodhouse slowly reconciled to the idea. She was also helped by Emma and Mr. Knightley in this. When the engagement was made known to the rest of their friends it was generally well approved. The only person who expressed disapproval was Mrs. Elton. She bewailed the loss of Mr. Knightley's freedom to organize exploring parties for her. She knew that a Mrs. Knightley would throw cold water on everything. She also disapproved of the idea of their living together at Hartfield as one which would not work out happily.

Chapter 54

Just a few days before the John Knightleys were expected for the wedding, Mr. Knightley gave Emma a very pleasant surprise by telling her that Robert Martin had proposed to Harriet and had been accepted. Emma was in all eagerness to know the circumstances in which the second proposal had been made and accepted. Mr. Knightley explained these as well as he could. Harriet was staying on with the John Knightleys in London so as to

be able to return with them to Hartfield. Then Mr. Knightley had sent Robert Martin with some business papers to John Knightley who invited him to join a small party in the evening. This party included Harriet Smith who was John Knightley's guest at the time. Robert Martin met her again when he dined with the family next day. During these meetings the young man had addressed himself so well to Harriet that before he left London he could propose to her and be accepted. Emma was very pleased at this turn of affairs and now her heart could permanently be at peace regarding Harriet. She could hardly control her outburst of happiness at what she had learned that she soon withdrew on the excuse of getting ready for her daily visit to Randalls with her father.

At Randalls she was agreeably surprised to meet with Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. Frank, having made repeated apologies for the deception he had practised on his friends, went on to congratulate Emma on her engagement to Mr. Knightley whom he would not presume to praise. Emma on coming away from Randalls could not help comparing Frank Churchill with Mr. Knightley when she had narrowly escaped falling in love with. She proudly admitted to herself that Mr. Knightley was infinitely superior to Frank Churchill and the contemplation of his worth made her extremely happy.

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If Emma had any further anxiety on Harriet's account, it was removed by her meeting with the girl on her return from London with the John Knightleys. Harriet had evidently loved Robert Martin all along and his continuing to love her, all the time, must have appealed to her irresistibly. It was soon revealed that she had no high parentage to boast of, as Emma had believed. She was the only daughter of a tradesman who was rich enough to afford her the comfortable maintenance which had ever been hers and decent enough to wish for concealment. As such Robert Martin was a very good match for her and he

was treated liberally by her father. As Harriet was drawn away more and more by her engagements with the Martins, she was less and less at Hartfield and the friendship between her and Emma was slowly sinking into a calmer sort of goodwill on both sides. Before the end of September, Emma accompanied Harriet to Church to see her hand bestowed on the faithful Robert Martin. Within a month of this event, the marriage between Emma and Mr. Knightley was celebrated in a quietly becoming manner. Much to the disappointment of Mrs. Elton there was little display of finery or parade.

But inspite of there being "very little white satin and very few lace veils" at the wedding, it was a most happy union in the opinion of the small band of true friends who attended it. Thus Emma Woodhouse, the first lady in Highbury was united to the finest gentleman for miles around, who was truly worthy of her.

Chapter XIX

THEME AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE NOVEL

THE BASIC MOVEMENT OF EMMA IS FROM DELUSION TO SELF-RECOGNITION, FROM ILLUSION TO REALITY—THE WORKING OUT OF EMMA'S PROGRESS OUT OF HER ERRORS INTO MORAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY—THE AUTHORESS'S ATTITUDE TO PROBLEMS INVOLVED

In *Emma* we have the story of a young lady, Emma Woodhouse, who, being idle and not a little vain of her position and her superior judgment, indulged in fancies which brought distress to others and some mortification, followed by repentance, to herself. She fancies first that she can raise a girl of illegitimate birth and moderate education to her own level of refinement; that this girl Harriet Smith, is too good, as she is now her chosen companion, for the honest farmer, Robert Martin. Emma, meanwhile, begins to look on Mr. Elton, the young and self-seeking Vicar of Highbury, as the destined husband of Harriet and busies herself about bringing the two together. To her double annoyance, Mr. Elton finally proposes to Emma and her pride and insight both suffer a setback. Emma next fancies herself in love with Frank Churchill, the handsome, high-spirited, aristocratic young son of Mr. Weston. After a time she finds out that she does not really care for him and her next scheme is to bring about an attachment between this young man and her protegee, Harriet Smith. She fancies that Jane Fairfax, the orphaned daughter of the sister of her poor neighbour, Miss Bates, is harbouring an unlawful love for a married man. She

tells Frank Churchill about her suspicions regarding Jane Fairfax and this becomes a subject of merriment for them. Emma has yet to learn that all this, while Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill are secretly engaged. Most disconcerting of all is the discovery that Harriet is nourishing a fancy of her own that she has won the love of Emma's dearest, truest, and oldest friend, Mr. Knightley. All of a sudden, Emma realises that she herself is in love with Mr. Knightley and that she cannot lose him to any other woman. She does not have long to wait in the agony of suspense. At news of Frank Churchill's engagement, Mr. Knightley hastens to her side believing that she is in need of solace, after being so villainously betrayed. He is overjoyed to find Emma heartfree and he cannot help giving expression to his own true love which will no longer be hid. Emma herself, though overcome with joy and speechless with astonishment for a moment soon makes him happy by the avowal of her own love and they are married soon after Harriet has been led to the altar by her faithful Robert Martin.

This is the story of *Emma* and the main interest of its theme lies in the disparity between Emma's misapprehensions and the truth which is finally borne in upon her at the end of each blundering scheme of hers. The whole theme is dealt with in the spirit of comedy and Emma is shown to be the victim of her own illusions.

It may be said that the book turns on the contrast between appearance and reality or, more correctly, that the significance of the novel lies in the variety of illusions and in the complexity of reality.

According to Orlo Williams, we may profitably apply to *Emma*, analysis of the kind which Mr. Percy Lubbock speaks of in his *Craft of Fiction*. "The construction of *Emma*, in point of fact," says Orlo Williams, "is a master-piece of finished grace in seven well-balanced movements which vary in length and in tempo but follow one another in a harmonious succession of stresses and relaxations which it is most interesting to follow." The first of these movements,

which takes in the first seventeen chapters, is concerned with the Harriet Smith, Elton debacle. By the end of the first chapter the stage is already set for Emma's first mistake and only a heroine is wanting for this little comedy. The heroine soon appears in the person of the young boarder whom Mrs. Goddard, the mistress of the local boarding school introduces at Hartfield. This girl is soon taken in hand by Emma and her humble life is turned upside down with the severing of her connections with the Yeomanry represented by Robert Martin and his family. The wings of Emma's fancy are at full stretch as she believes that she can improve the mind and the lot of the pretty but brainless Harriet. While Emma is busily scheming to bring about the union of Harriet and Elton, Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston discuss her faults and foibles (Chapter V). With our knowledge of Emma's character thus enlarged, we can better enjoy the comedy of her deception of herself, Harriet and Mr. Elton as it proceeds rapidly with the episode of Elton's taking Harriet's portrait to London to be framed and the writing of the charade. The blind assurance of Emma's self sastisfied arguments with Mr. Knightley and her meeting with Elton in Vicarage Lane and the interlude provided by the arrival of the John Knightley at Hartfield are all highly entertaining and they culminate in the Christmas dinner at Randalls. This dinner-party is so carefully arranged through three whole chapters and prepares us for the masterstroke of Mr. Elton's declaration to Emma and the description of their mutual discomfiture in the crawling carriage. The first movement of the story now comes to an end with Emma's depressed reflections, her buoyant recovery and the departure of Mr. Elton for Bath.

The second movement, though slower, is excellently managed. After her first fancy had been dissipated in anger and self-reproach, Emma now embarks upon her second. This consists in the assumption of a special relation to Frank Churchill when he shall appear at Highbury. Through a conversation with Mr. Knightley in which she good humouredly defends Frank Churchill, Emma is made to reinstate herself in the reader's opinion, before she

indulges her third fancy. Meanwhile Miss Bates comes on the scene with her inimitable conversation and conveys the news of her niece's coming to stay for a time in Highbury. Emma fancies that the reason for Jane Fairfax's coming to Highbury is her unfortunate attachment to Mr. Dixon. There is a short pause now in the narrative to acquaint the reader with Jane's past history and Emma's reluctance to be friend her. Miss. Bates now announces Mr. Elton's engagement which causes great perturbation to Harriet. Next we are told of the embarrassment of her meeting with the Martins at the local shop and Emma's odious part in Harriet's want of good manners to the Martins. The last chapter of this second movement in the plot introduces Frank Churchill, handsome, provocative and quite ready to meet Emma half way in flirtation.

The third movement which is short and sparkling shows us how skilfully Jane Austen suggests the excitement aroused among the ladies of Highbury by Frank Churchill's presence among them. Emma and Frank are always marching triumphantly before the admiring Westons and Bateses. There is the walk through the village, the examination of the ball-room at the Crown, the project of a dance and Frank's first discussion of Jane with Emma. Here he maliciously encourages her to talk of her fancied reading of Jane's character. Following the episode of Frank's visit to London to have his hair cut is the dinner-party at the Coles' where the talk is all of Jane's new piano and conjectures about its donor. Emma's fatuous self confidence is here ironically exposed. She is fooled by Frank to the top of her bent. She now preens herself on the appearance and happiness of her protegee, Harriet. She blandly tells Mrs. Weston that Mr. Knightley should never marry. In the next two chapters there is much brilliant comedy, especially in the meeting of Miss Bates with the company from Hartfied, her soliloquies on Jane's piano and the broken rivet in her mother's spectacles, the congregation of the company in the Bates's sitting room etc. This movement of the story closes with the preparations for the ball and the sudden suspense brought about by Frank's abrupt

departure and his mysterious agitation on taking leave of Emma. "Thus she is left alone, embroidering the theme of her second fancy into a singularly unimpassioned love-motive."

At the opening of the fourth movement of the plot, we see Emma quietly pondering the state of her heart and that of Frank Churchill. At the end of this movement she is again alone and has already fancied herself out of love with Frank. Though she believes herself loved by Frank, she hopes that the sentiment will admit of a gentle cooling into a warm friendship. This hope leads to her fourth fancy that she may bestow on Harriet the place in Frank's affections, already vacated by her. Meanwhile Mrs. Elton has arrived in Highbury and she now holds the centre of the stage with the broad comedy of her vulgarity. This ridiculous character is given full play, culminating in the dinner-party at Hartfield where she patronises Emma, calls Mr. Woodhouse her dear old beau and talk interminably of her prosperous brother-in-law, Mr. Suckling.

The fifth movement is full of action. In the six chapters which comprise this movement we notice the turning round of the fates upon the offending Emma. There is the opening ball at the Crown so often praised for its masterly description. The next day Harriet walks into Hartfield, fainting upon the arm of Frank Churchill after he had saved her from a group of gypsies who had scared her. Emma's fourth fancy now bursts into sudden growth and it is encouraged by Harriet's confession of a new attachment and Emma's misunderstanding of her supposed confidence. Frank n ow makes a blunder regarding the source of some local gossip and Mr. Knightley is angered by signs of intelligence between Jane Fairfax and the acknowledged suitor of Emma. Next comes the strawberry-party at Donwell, from which Jane makes a distresed escape while Frank gives way to ill-temper. Thus we come to the great finale of the picnic on Box Hill where Emma flirts shamelessly with Frank Churchill, is rude to Miss Bates and gets scolded by Mr. Knightley. As she drives home the tears

flow freely down her cheeks and she makes no attempt to check them.

The sixth movement though a little overburdened by the clearing of the misunderstanding between Jane and Frank, completes the march of the fates against Emma. When she is worried over having to cause pain to Harriet by the news of Frank's secret engagement to Jane, Harriet deals her an unexpected and terrible blow. As the quiet and submissive Harriet expresses her belief that Mr. Knightley is in love with her, Emma is literally stunned and abased to the ground. She repents of her follies, particularly that of attempting to improve the lot of Harriet. The future looks desolate enough to the proud girl who fears she may have to lose her dearest and oldest friend to the silly Harriet. It suddenly dawns upon her that she has all along been loving Mr. Knightley without being aware of it. Now she cannot afford to lose him, and particularly Harriet.

The seventh and last movement of the story now succeeds to the dull and moaning chords which close the sixth. There is great agitation at first in the meeting of Emma with Mr. Knightley but it calms down to a peaceful resolution of all the discordant elements after the unexpectedly provoked declaration in the shrubbery. Now there is a gradual falling away into repose and very soon the wedding-bells ring for Harriet and Emma. Jane Fairfax also is to be married to Frank Churchill soon after the period of mourning for his aunt is over.

Having thus analysed the whole structure of the novel, we see that Jane Austen has a mastery of vital rhythm, not only in sentences but also in the whole fabric of her creation. Speaking about this, Orlo William says, "With subtle variations, climax answers climax and repose balances repose. No two movements are alike, but all are bound together by a natural affinity, like the movements of Purcell's Golden Sonata ; and within their limits all the moods, all the graces and all the less boisterous humours have their diverting play and interchange. As in an opera by Mozart, one bewitching theme succeeds another ; our

enjoyment is never strained but never relaxed. By ingenious, yet easy alterations of key and measure, of piquant solos and triumphant "tuti" our consciousness is held continuously enthralled, until the last chord has been struck. We return again, when the element of surprise is quite worn away and again we are subjugated. It is no wonder that having once surrendered to this enchantress, we are always in her power, listening to such bright and graceful music, so pure in form, so delicate in texture."

The basic movement of *Emma* is from delusion to self-recognition and from illusion to reality. Emma Woodhouse at the beginning of the novel is the victim of her own delusions. She thinks that she is extremely wise and clever and that she can see into the thoughts, feelings and desires of those around her. She is universally admired and spoilt by her family and friends and thus comes to have a very high opinion of herself. When Miss Taylor, her sole companion at Hartfield for so many years marries Mr. Weston and goes to live with him at Randalls, half a mile away, she begins to occupy her idle hours by trying to order the lives of her close associates like Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith. But after imagining herself to be succeeding very well in bringing about an attachment between Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith, Emma is rudely awakened to the truth that Mr. Elton has been paying his attentions to herself and not to Harriet. This should have shaken Emma's faith in her own judgment and insight into human character. But instead of giving up further attempts at seeing into other people's hearts and arranging their marriages for them she promptly goes on indulging in other foolish fancies. The first of these is concerned with her imaginary love for Frank Churchill. It takes only a little time for even a self-deceiving fool like Emma to realise that she is not really in love with the young man. Having made this discovery about the state of her own heart, her next attempt is to bring about an attachment between her protegee, Harriet Smith and Mr. Frank Churchill whom she believes to be in love with her and whom she wants to be weaned of that love soon enough. Here, while speaking with Harriet and

insisting on mentioning no names, she makes the mistake of leading the silly girl to believe that she would encourage her to love Mr. Knightley. This is the most shocking blunder that Emma makes as far as her own feelings are concerned. When Harriet admits that she has elevated her thoughts to the squire of Donwell Abbey, the scales suddenly seem to fall from Emma's eyes. She suddenly realises that her love for Mr. Knightley which has all along been masquerading as a friendship, is the most important thing in her life. It is her jealousy of her prospective rival that leads to self-recognition and the acceptance of reality in place of her many delusions about herself as well as other people. Jane Austen exhibits consummate art in depicting Emma's gradual progress out of her errors into moral and emotional maturity. Emma arrives at self-knowledge only through bitter experience. Again and again the voice of commonsense tries to make itself heard through the warnings of Mr. Knightley but being the victim of her own delusions, Emma does not listen to it. But when she has had disillusionment after disillusionment and when her greatest disillusionment comes with the realisation that none but herself should marry Mr. Knightley, Emma is seen to have arrived at self-knowledge. She would not have had this self-knowledge but for the harsh lessons her own experience of life had taught her. From Emma's story, Jane Austen wants us to understand the disparity between things and persons as they are and as they seem to be.

Chapter XX

MORAL PATTERN OF THE NOVEL

A CONSIDERATION OF THE OPPOSITE VALUES PRESENTED IN EMMA AND COMPARISON WITH THE VALUES INVOLVED IN OTHER NOVELS—THE IDEA THAT FREEDOM CAN ONLY BE GAINED THROUGH SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Most critics and readers of Jane Austen are of the opinion that, like Johnson, she is a moralist in the strict sense. Her morality is not merely embodied in her plots. It is often openly expressed in unambiguous terms. Following a fashion of her day she gave abstract titles like *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Persuasion* to three of her novels. The others too, on account of their moral pattern, could be given similiar titles. Her explicit statements on morality which are scattered in all her novels are well worth reflecting on, inspite of their old fashioned terminology. It is now generally admitted that each of Jane Austen's novels, contains much more wisdom than is formulated in her explicit statements. *Emma*, in addition to being a piece of social history or the exposition of an ironic view of life, is alo a novel of instruction, with a definite moral pattern. It is the story of Emma Woodhouse, rich, young, beautiful, intelligent, perceptive and gay and at the same time, vain of her own perceptions, snobbish, domineering, rash and selfish. Her misapprehensions of men and women she comes into close contact with, of Harriet, of Mr. Elton, of Jane Fairfax, of Frank Churchill, of Mr. Knightley and of herself, lead her into situations which displays the profound contradictions in human experience. Emma is shown to be the victim of her own illusions, who creates a world, which is quite different from the real one. Reading through the story of her blunders and the mortification each blunder brings one cannot help wondering how deceptive and how misleading appearances can be. Through incidents and situations drenched with irony, Emma's disillusionment is gradually brought about till she

sees herself as she is. She who had all along been proud of her own intellectual and social superiority to those around her feels deeply mortified. In her moment of self-revelation she understands the value of simple virtues like warmth and tenderness of heart and sincerity of feeling. In a passage which has the very ring of sincerity, she exclaims : "Warmth and tenderness of heart, with an affectionate, open manner, will beat all the cleverness of head in the world, for attraction. I am sure it will. It is tenderness of heart which makes my dear father so generally beloved which gives Isabella all her popularity. I have it not, but I know how to prize and respect it. Harriet is my superior in all the charm and all the felicity it gives. Dear Harriet ! I would not change you for the clearest-headed, longest-sighted, best-judging female breathing. Oh ! the coldness of a Jane Fairfax ! Harriet is worth a hundred such. And for a wife, a sensible man's wife, it is invaluable. I mention no names; but happy the man who changes Emma for Harriet !"

Before the book ends as happily as anyone of Emma's friends could wish, Emma has been made to pay for her delusive self-confidence through truly painful humiliations. The Emma who stands self-revealed at the end of the story is no less human, though slightly less amusing than the Emma who had been confidently trying to see into other people's hearts and trying to arrange their lives for them. Her example should warn others to free themselves from their delusions and to know their own selves better. In fact one cannot be really free so long as one remains a victim of illusions like Emma. Freedom from illusions can only be gained through self-knowledge, however painful the process may be. This is an idea which is brought out very effectively in *Pride and Prejudice* also. So long as Elizabeth and Darcy remain the victim of their own misapprehensions they are not free to progress to a state of happiness such as they deserve. The process of awakening to self-knowledge is painful and humiliating to Darcy as it is to Emma. In the process of arriving at self-recognition both Darcy and Emma grow and change and develop. With her eyes opened by love, Emma learns and changes and grows and watching her we too learn a great deal about the contradictions in human experience which make the essence of irony.

Chapter XXI

IRONY AS A DRAMATIC DEVICE IN EMMA

IRONY BASIC TO HER MODE OF WRITING EMMA IS DRENCHED IN IRONY—IT IS LINKED WITH MORAL VIEW POINTS

Emma, like the rest of Jane Austen's novels, can be considered on three levels of meaning. First of all it can be considered as a picture of country-life among the upper middle classes in southern England at the end of the eighteenth century. Secondly, it can be taken as a sort of broad allegory in which certain human virtues and defects are set forth in narrative form and commented on in this way. Thirdly, the novel may be viewed on the ironic level where the various incidents, situations and characters may be regarded as implying something beyond what they embody. The appeal of Jane Austen's novels, like that of all great art, lies in their being at the same time, universal and illustrative of the time in which they were created.

According to Professor Chevalier, "the basic feature of every Irony is a contrast between a reality and an appearance." Jane Austen has a clear perception of the contradictions in human experience which yield a detachment. This detachment in its turn grants clearer perception. As A. H. Wright puts it, "There is in her disengagement, an objectivity which is not scientific, because not disinterested. In fact she is deeply concerned with both aspects of the contradictions she perceives; searching the orchards of human experience she finds the bitter sweet fruit of confusing appearance and ambiguous essence and she becomes a person of the divided, the ironic, vision." Professor Mudrick, writing on Jane Austen, calls irony "a neutral discoverer of

incongruities.'' Her irony makes her to have the divided vision of Chaucer, Cervantes Swift. Nowhere-else among her novels is this better illustrated than in *Emma.*

Emma Woodhouse, the young, rich, intelligent, beautiful, charming, perceptive and gay heroine of the novel, is rather vain of her own perceptions, snobbish, domineering, rash and selfish. It is true that she is devoted to her father, charitable to the poor, fond of Mr. Knightley and attached to her ex-governess, Mrs. Weston. But she is the victim of her own illusions and she creates a world which is quite different from the real world. Her many misapprehensions, regarding Harriet, Mr. Elton, Jane Fairfax, Frank Churchill, Mr. Knightley and herself lead her to develop and encourage situations which are essentially ironic in their profound contradictions. We feel like exclaiming, "How deceptive is appearance and how misleading!" One could make the same exclamations about the ironic situations in Shakespeare's tragedies, *Othello* or *Lear*. The significance of the novel lies in the variety of illusions and the complexity of reality.

R. W. Chapman, speaking about Jane Austen's technique in *Emma,* lays emphasis on the dramatic method which hardly allows us to see anything except through the heroine's eyes. We are made to view events and persons through Emma's faulty spectacles. It is true that Mrs. Weston supplies some facts but these are no more than stage direction and can hardly be said to interfere with the dramatic method.

The story of Emma is drenched in irony from beginning to end. We cannot help seeing all the time the difference between the truth as it is and as Emma believes it to be. At the beginning of the story we find that being idle and not a little vain of her social position and her superior judgment she indulges in fancies which being distress to others and some mortification, followed by repentance, to herself. The many situations which are brought about by her blunders are fraught with irony. In the first part of the novel there are many scenes in which Mr. Elton is paying

homage to Emma which she believes is meant for her protegee, Harriet. The ironic situations are worked up to a climax till Emma is finally made to awaken to the truth that Mr. Elton was all along paying his attentions to her. This causes her double annoyance because her pride and her insight have both had a downfall. When the gallant young Frank Churchill makes his appearance in Highbury, Emma soon fancies herself in love with him though she easily fancies herself out again. Meanwhile she fancies that another young lady, Jane Fairfax is having an unlawful attachment to the husband of her benefactor's daughter. She also imagines that open-hearted Harriet Smith, whom Frank Churchill accidentlly rescues from a party of gipsies, can succeed herself as the object of Frank Churchill's attentions. It is ironic that she has no idea of the secret engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax and hence confides to Frank her suspicions about Jane. It is most disconcerting of all when Emma discovers that Harriet is nourishing a fancy of her own that she has won the love of Emma's oldest and dearest friend, Mr. Knightley. Emma's happiness is now truly wrecked because she knows in a sudden illuminating flash that she cannot let anybody but herself marry Mr. Knightley. She is saved from despair by the unexpected disclosure of his love for her by Mr. Knightley. As Harriet declines into the arms of the faithful Robert Martin and Emma is led to the altar by the worthy Mr. Knightley, the story of this small village chronicle of a year comes to an end. The admirable irony of Miss Austen is in evidence in every page of the book. The dramatic situations are made all the more enjoyable and the dialogue all the more interesting because of the contradictions between appearance and reality. We take delight in the heroine's blunders because what she thinks and feels belies that she is.

There are certain critics who would impose upon literature the test of its being a substitute for religion and according to them Jane Austen's novels may not be sufficiently elevating, though they contain an admirable criticism of life and express a high moral code. This is

particularly true of Emma, where, through the words of Mr. Knightley, the novelist expresses the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealings. There was nothing Jane Austen disliked more than any kind of concealment or deception. She disliked the secret engagement of Frank and Jane too much to be able to rise to her best in portraying them. When the truth is known and he is safely engaged, Mr. Knightley asks, "My Emma, does not everything prove the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealings with each other ?" This is the moral of the book and "it belongs to the whole heart and mind of Jane Austen." As in all other novels of hers, we find here also the repentance of the wrongdoers. The heroine Emma, repents again and again, as she makes each new discovery of her conceit and folly and unkindness. Beyond the consideration of Emma's conceit is what, according to A. H. Wright, the major theme of the novel, tenderness of heart. In a moment of self-awareness, Emma reflects on it in a very revealing manner and says that "true tenderness of heart will beat all the cleverness of head in the world, for attraction." Emma's self-importance, her confidence in her superior judgment and her wish to order the lives of other people are the reparable defects which constitute the comic stuff of the novel. The tenderness of heart which Emma possesses in great measure is often obscured, conquered, or deflected. The irony of Emma lies in the fact that tenderness of heart opposes itself to sharpness and clarity of vision. Emma, the heroine, coming up against the ironic problem, declares herself on the side of tenderness at the expense of other qualities. Thus we are able to understand Jane Austen's own views on the subject.

Chapter XXII

EMMA AS A COMEDY OF MATCH-MAKING ERRORS

HOW IT DIFFERS FROM OTHER NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN ?

The business of getting people engaged and married is one of the primary concerns of Jane Austen in her novels. All the six great novels she has written illustrate this preoccupation of the novelist with the ideas of love, courtship and marriage. This has in fact made critics like Garrod to accuse her of having only one plot which is made to do duty for five or six novels through endless cuttings, trimmings and refashionings. But whatever her detractors might say on the subject, Jane Austen has been able to write six very enjoyable novels on variations of the same theme, so to say. *Emma*, one of the most delightful of her novels, and second in importance only to *Pride and Prejudice*, is also greatly concerned with the business of getting people engaged and married. Almost everybody in the novel is busy about this all-important pursuit and almost everybody blunders so that the story becomes an agreeable comedy of match-making errors.

At the opening of the novel we are introduced to the heroine, Emma Woodhouse, young, beautiful, rich and clever, with a comfortable home and happy disposition. Being idle and not a little vain of her social position and her superior judgment she is tempted to play Cupid to her friends and neighbours. She is determined to try her hand at match-making inspite of the warnings of her true and sincere friend, Mr. Knightley, the squire of Donwell Abbey. She says, she will be content with making a match for Mr. Elton, the young and handsome Vicar of Highbury and

after that she will give up the business. Knightley's sensible answer to this is that a young man of six or seven and twenty should be able to choose a wife for himself and should, therefore, be left to do it his own way. But Emma, whose heart is set on the pleasurable business of match-making does not heed his words. She is helped in her scheme by the appearance, on the scene, of just such a girl as she thinks would be a good match for Mr. Elton. Mrs. Goddard, who keeps a boarding school for young ladies asks permission to introduce at Hartfield, one Harriet Smith, the beautiful natural daughter of somebody, who has been with her long and has grown into an agreeable young lady. Harriet is promptly invited by Emma to Hartfield where she spends her time mostly in the company, not only of Emma herself but also of Mr. Elton who is a frequent visitor there. During the many meetings between Harriet and Mr. Elton, Emma tries to encourage the young Vicar to pay special attention to the charms of her protegee, Harriet, and thinks she is succeeding. What actually happens is that Mr. Elton feels himself more and more encouraged by Emma to become attached to her. The story progresses through many ironic situations and incidents which convince Emma that Mr. Elton would soon be making his proposal to Harriet who has already been persuaded by her to reject a suitor. Robert Martin, the gentleman farmer of Donwell Abbey Farm—as being not good enough for her. Harriet readily transfers her affections to Mr. Elton, the young and self-seeking clergyman who airs his want of sense in a polite circle than that of honest Robert Martin. But Emma suffers a rude shock, when, alone with her in the carriage after the Westons' Christmas party, Mr. Elton proposes to her. She finds that her pride and her insight have both suffered in being discovered as the object of Mr. Elton's attentions. Harriet is terribly disappointed, especially when she hears the news of Mr. Elton's marriage to a fashionable and rich Miss Hewkins at Bath within a few weeks. Thus Emma fails miserably in her first attempt at match-making. Emma's first fancy thus having been dissipated in anger and self-reproach, a second fancy is shown hovering in her mind. This consists

in the assumption of a special relation to Frank Churchill, the young and agreeable son of Mr. Weston as soon as he arrives at Highbury. Emma's defence of Frank Churchill in her conversation with Mr. Knightley arouses the unconscious jealousy of the older man and Emma tries to laugh away his annoyance. The coming of Miss Bates on the scene and her announcing the arrival of her niece, Jane Fairfax in Highbury leads to Emma's third fancy that this reserved young woman is harbouring an unlawful love for Mr. Dixon, the husband of her benefactor's daughter. Frank Churchill, eminently, ready to meet Emma halfway in flirtation, fools her about Jane to the top of her bent during the party at the Coles'. As she talks blandly with Mrs. Weston and lays it down that Mr. Knightley should never marry, her state of vanity is ripe for disaster. During their meeting at the Bates's, Frank's, facetiousness misleads Emma completely while it pleases Jane secretly. After the preparations for a ball at the Crown have evidently brought Emma and Frank closer together to the great delight of the Westons. Frank abruptly leaves Highbury in a great state of agitation. Emma "is left to embroider the theme of her second fancy into an uninpassioned love-motive" during his absence.

Next we see Emma pondering the state of her own heart and finally fancying herself out of love with Frank Churchill as easily as she has fancied herself in love. Her match-making instinct is again roused and she decides to bestow upon Harriet the place in Frank's heart which she has so coolly resigned. With the return of Frank Churchill and the arrival of Mrs. Elton in Highbury a little earlier events move fast. We now witness the turning round of the fates upon Emma who has been trying to order the lives of other people around her. Soon after the ball at the Crown, there is Harriet's encounter with the gipsies and she appears at Hartfield fainting upon Frank Churchill's arm. At this Emma's ideas of a match between Harriet and Frank Churchill burst into insolent growth. Harriet's confession of a new attachment and Emma's misunderstanding of her supposed confidence help the growth of

this new fancy. Mr. Knightley confides to Emma how he has noticed signs of intelligence between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax and expresses his view that the two may be secretly in love. But Emma who has full confidence in her own insight into character declares that a love between Frank and Jane is quite inconceivable. During the strawberry-party at Donwell and the picnic on Box Hill, we find Emma flirting most shamelessly with Frank Churchill and in the exuberance of thoughtless high spirits, she behaves very rudely to Miss Bates. For this Mr. Knightley reproves her very severely and she goes home very repentant and humbled.

The next part of the story where the misunderstanding between Jane and Frank is cleared completes the humiliation of Emma. She has once again been proved quite stupid in her match-making schemes. She is very much worried about the way she is to console Harriet who has been repeatedly misguided by her. But Harriet, the submissive and patronised, now deals Emma the heaviest blow when she confesses her attachment to Mr. Knightley. Emma can neither disbelieve nor discourage this silly girl who has the presumption to believe herself loved by Mr. Knightley. The vain and conceited Emma is now abased to the ground and she is left repenting of all her follies and reflecting grimly on the bleakness of the future. But almost without warning Mr. Knightley now appears at Hartfield and in the course of a few minutes the bleakness of despair is turned into the exultation of triumphant happiness as he makes his declaration of love to Emma. This young lady who had all along been foolishly making matches for other people, without realising how her own happiness depended on her marrying this worthy gentleman now awakens to self-knowledge and the happiness of love. But her many blunders and the irony of the situations into which her match-making leads her, make the novel a veritable comedy of match- making errors.

Emma differs from other novels of Jane Austen in one or two important respects. There is about it a peculiar sedateness which will not be very much approved of by

those who want fiction to be adventurous or passionate or ecstatic. It is a story of quiet people, quietly told. It is not merely the story of Emma Woodhouse and her match-making errors. It is also the story of life in the little village of Highbury for the duration of about one year. The communal life, with the typical village-characters like the wealthy squire, the small landed class, the well-to-do landowners, the clerical and professional characters are all there in their natural environments. In the quiet life of Highbury a secret engagement provides the highest excitement and a dance at the village-inn, is a sensational event. The life of Highbury which is completely absorbed in its quiet agricultural occupations has been described by a certain critic as bovine.

Another respect in which the novel is different from other novels of Jane Austen is that the heroine, Emma, is more particularly the centre of the novel than the heroines of the other novels. From the time that we are introduced to Emma Woodhouse and her particular situation in life, it is she who occupies our attention and holds our interest. All the other characters, including the amiable Westons and the sensible Knightley are only subsidiary. It is Emma's hopes, ambitions and schemes which make up the story. Till the very last chapter in which her quiet wedding is briefly described, it is she who holds the centre of the stage and at the moment of her joy and triumph in the revelation of Knightley's love, we rejoice with her most heartily and sincerely.

Chapter XXIII

KNIGHTLEY'S SPECIAL ROLE

George Knightley, the squire of Donwell Abbey, and the elder brother of John Knightley, who has married Emma Woodhouse's sister Isabella, has a special role to play in the novel, *Emma.* He has been in love with Emma from the time she was thirteen years old and yet this love has not blinded him to her many faults. "He is a sensible man who appraises coolly, judges calmly and acts decisively." As such, he is able to see the many little defects in Emma's generally good character and to detect even her slightest deviations from right or proper behaviour. His long and sincere friendship with Mr. Woodhouse and his daughter, as well as his brother's marriage with Emma's sister, give him the rights of a privileged person at Hartfield and in his relations with the family. Hardly a day passes without his appearing at Hartfield to spend some time with the father and daughter. He helps Mr. Woodhouse in managing his business-affairs and he counsels Emma on all matters. Throughout the novel we are made to see events and persons from the point of view of Emma who is the victim of her own illusions and also from the commonsense point of view represented by Mr. Knightley. The views of Mr. Knightley would represent the views of the most sensible among the readers of the novel. Because the advice given by Mr. Knightley happened to be so wise and sensible, Emma could have avoided many silly mistakes if she had followed that advice. But then we would not have had the very interesting story of the novel which is based on Emma's enjoyable blunders. The fact that she ignores his advice again and again does not make Mr. Knightley to give up his special role as her friend, philosopher and guide. Throughout the story he acts as her good angel, ever at her side, watching over her every act and trying earnestly to

prevent her from doing any thing wrong on improper. The fact that Emma wilfully ignores Mr. Knightley's advice shows that there are forces always at war with ordinary good sense. Subsequent events vindicate Mr. Knightley's judgment while hardly diminishing our interest in Emma and her blundering efforts at match-making.

Mr. Knightley appears in his special role from the very first chapter of the novel. He is introduced to us as one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them. When Emma, supported by her father, takes credit for having made the match between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor, she tries unsuccessfully to dampen her vanity by pointing out the truth of the situation. He concludes by saying :—"You made a lucky guess ; and that is all that can be said." Emma is in no way depressed by his remark and she declares her intention of finding a wife for Mr. Elton. The sensible Mr. Knightley advises her to let the vicar choose his own wife as he is old enough to do so. But heedless of his words, she soon chooses for Mr. Elton. Her choice falls on Harriet Smith, "the natural daughter of somebody" who has been introduced at Hartfield by Mrs. Goddard at whose boarding-school she had been studying. Emma who has taken an immediate liking to this good-looking and simple girl, thinks she is the very best match for Mr. Elton. Hence she is clearly and openly at odds with Mr. Knightley who thinks it proper for Harriet to marry his yeoman, the gentleman farmer, Mr. Robert Martin, who is in love with her. At Knightley's suggestion Robert Martin attempts to make a proposal of marriage and fails because Harriet is always at Hartfield with Emma, slowly imbibing ideas of her own self-importance. She is influenced by Emma to turn down honest Robert Martin's proposal as being not good enough for her. Mr. Knightley's cool judgment tells him that Mr. Elton would never marry a nobody like Harriet, however good-looking she may be. Knowing Robert Martin's worth and Harriet's real position, he desires to bring them together, but Emma's foolish interference prevents them from getting married till the end of the novel. Several times

he warns Emma to give up thoughts of getting Harriet married to Mr. Elton, but she does not pay heed to him till the vicar finally proposes to herself. Then only Emma realises how right Mr. Knightley has been in his estimate of the matrimonial ambition of the vicar.

Again in the relations between Mr. Frank Churchill and Emma Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley soon discovers that there is lack of sincerity on the youngman's part and lack of propriety on Emma's. Before anyone else has the least suspicion of the true relations between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, Mr. Knightley observes signs of intelligence passing between Frank and Jane and warns Emma of a possible attachment between them. But Emma who believes that Frank Churchill is in love with her and wants to get him slowly attracted to Harriet refuses to agree with her friend.

During the picnic to Box Hill, when Emma, in thoughtless cruelty exercises her wit and pains poor Miss Bates, Mr. Knightley does not hesitate to reprove her in the severest tones. It is as if this worthy gentleman had Emma's conscience in his keeping. Being independent and high-spirited she would have run into all kinds of dangers but for the timely warnings and advices of this worthy old friend whom she loves, respects and admires most among men. Though she does not always act according to his advice, Emma wants as far as possible, not to do the kind of things which he would disapprove of and she delights in doing the kind of good deeds which he would greatly applaud. So he was actually setting the standard of behaviour for Emma, though like all erring mortals, she did not all the time keep to this standard. This is the special role intended by Jane Austen for Mr. Knightley in the novel.

Chapter XXIV

THE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Emma, like the rest of Jane Austen's novels, gives us splendid proof of Jane Austen's powers of characterisation. If her world was rather narrow, it enabled her all the better to observe keenly and understand fully the men and women she came into contact with. The result of this careful observation and full understanding of human nature in its varied forms is to be seen in the very convincing and very human personages who appear in her novels.

Emma Woodhouse, the heroine of the novel named after her, is by no means a model of perfection. This is hinted at by the novelist herself when she says about her : "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." We have to agree with the critic Howells that it required great courage on the part of a novelist to portray a heroine like Emma and to expect her to win the reader's fancy. An officious and self-confident girl seldom takes our fancy and yet Emma does so in spite of her having these and many other faults.

When the story opens, Emma is described as being young, rich, intelligent, beautiful, charming, perceptive and gay. But she is also said to be vain and self-conceited, snobbish, rash, domineering and selfish. It is true that she is devoted to her father, charitable to the poor, fond of Mr. Knightley and attached to her friends. But her many misapprehensions of Harriet, of Mr. Elton, of Frank Churchill, of Jane Fairfax, of Mr. Knightley and even of herself lead her to develop and encourage a number of situations which are highly amusing to the reader but very embarrassing to the persons concerned. Emma, like all

great heroes, including Shakespeare's Othello or Lear, moves in the world of her own creation and not in the actual world. In the first part of the novel, we see the Emma of supreme self-confidence and serene delusion who thinks she is making a match between the handsome young vicar, and her protegee, Harriet Smith. She pays no heed to Mr. Knightley's sensible advice to leave the vicar to choose his own wife as a young man of six or seven-and-twenty can very well take care of himself. She contrives to arouse Mr. Elton's interest in Harriet by making a picture of the girl in the company of Elton. At this stage she persuades Harriet to refuse the honest young farmer, Robert Martin, whom Mr. Knightley considers her superior in sense as in situation. Mr. Knightley warns Emma not to consider Mr. Elton at all if she is going to try match-making for Harriet, as the vicar would marry only for worldly advantages. But blinded by her own delusions she again ignores the sound advice of a sincere friend. She persuades Harriet that Mr. Elton is only waiting for a suitable occasion to make his proposal. She is left stunned and speechless when Mr. Elton whom she has always been considering the lover of Harriet at last openly professes himself her lover. So Emma's first delusion leaves her terribly shocked while Mr. Elton is mortified and Harriet deeply hurt.

In the second part of the story, Emma is again the victim of illusion regarding Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. She is quite prepared to like the amiable and handsome young gentleman because of his kind attentions to herself and his apparent dislike of Jane Fairfax, with her cold reserve and her pale complexion. Emma who is completely taken in, confides to him her secret suspicions about Jane's attachment to Mr. Dixon and Frank Churchill encourages her. The entire pattern of Frank Churchill's behaviour, while at Highbury, is misunderstood by Emma, who prides herself on her penetration. Again Mr. Knightley warns her to be more careful in forming her opinions but she dismisses his suspicions as groundless.

At the famous party at the Coles, Emma goes to the extent of suggesting to Frank Churchill that the piano sent to Jane Fairfax must be a present from Mr. Dixon, the husband of her benefactor's daughter. Frank Churchill continues to practise his deceptions on Emma and flirts shamelessly with her at the Box Hill party, Emma was gay and thoughtless not from any real felicity but from feeling less happy than she had expected. Her gratuitous cruelty to Miss Bates, aroused Mr. Knightley's stern reproof and Emma was at last deeply touched. She tried to make amends for her cruel conduct in every possible way and her repeated attempts to make friends with Jane Fairfax would impress anyone in her favour.

Emma's match-making instinct is again aroused when she feels that poor Harriet whom Frank Churchill accidently rescues from the gypsies, deserves such a gallant young man. She advises Harriet to raise her thoughts to one who is quite superior to her in social status since marriages between persons of greater social disparity had already been known to take place. Thus encouraged, Harriet who was already much impressed by Mr. Knightley's dancing with her, when she was without a partner, raises her thoughts to him. Emma told Mrs. Weston not to try match-making because she did it so ill. It is ironic that she should accuse Mr. Weston of a crime of which she herself is guilty. But in spite of all her faults we cannot help liking her because she is so human in all that she says and does. She is never lacking in good breeding and likes truth and sincerity above everything else. This is the closest bond between her and Mr. Knightley. They are both essentially good and noble creatures and whenever Emma does wrong, Mr. Knightley diligently corrects her. The fact that she admits her mistake and mends her ways is something in her favour. When she is entrusted to the care of Mr. Knightley and has come to have better knowledge of herself, she is a very human and very lovable character. She has already paid for her delusive self-confidence by truly repenting of her folly. When Harriet began cherishing hopes of marrying Mr. Knightley, Emma who had mentioned no names

in advising Harriet to elevate her thoughts, imagined her to be in love with Frank Churchill. She was therefore deeply concerned for Harriet when she knew of the engagement between Jane and Frank Churchill. But when Harriet confessed that she had never given a thought to Frank Churchill and only cherished hopes of one day being married by Mr. Knightley, Emma suddenly knew that she could not allow anyone else to marry Mr. Knightley.

Thus Emma is seen to arrive at knowledge of her own heart only at the end of a series of delusions. She who had taken pride in her wisdom and penetration was seen to have acted most foolishly and blindly. She endured painful humiliations. We cannot help loving her for the delightful contradictions in her nature which had made her so attractive to Mr. Knightley.

George Knightley, the squire of Donwell Abbey is depicted throughout the story as a sensible, honest, upright gentleman of the highest principles and strictest moral code. He is the angel, constantly by the side of Emma, reproving and advising her whenever she does wrong and ever ready to appreciate any good or generous action of hers. Emma admitted to herself in her disillusionment that she had little commonsense. But Mr. Knightley was always known and admired for his good sense. As Andrew H. Wright says, "Mr. Knightley is a sensible man ! He appraises coolly, he judges calmly, he acts decisively." This is evident in the very first chapter where he tells Emma not to take credit for having brought about the marriage between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor when all that she did was to think of it first. Knightley's good sense is again in evidence when he advises Emma not to attempt to choose a wife for the vicar, as a young man of six or seven-and-twently should be able to do it for himself. When he feels that Emma is trying to effect an alliance between Mr. Elton and her protegee, Harriet, he again warns her that Harriet is not the kind of girl, whom the vicar would want to marry. Both these advices, though promptly discarded by Emma, reveal Knightley's practical wisdom and his insight into human character.

In their respective choices for Harriet Smith's hand in marriage, we find Knightley's good sense and Emma's lack of it. Emma, misled by her delusions, thinks she is succeeding in her attempt to arouse love for Harriet in Mr. Elton. Knightley who has better knowledge of Mr. Elton's matrimonial ambitions and Robert Martin's worth as well as Harriet's real position would have brought about the union between his yeoman and Mrs. Goddard's boarder. Through Emma's unwise interference he does not succeed at first, though ultimately his choice prevails. Mr. Knightley's shrewd insight into character is again brought out by his assessment of Frank Churchill who is universally admired at Highbury. He cannot think very high of a young man who goes to London, riding more than thirty miles merely to have his hair cut. To a man of Knightley's upright character there is something shady and underhand about everything relating to Frank Churchill. It is Mr. Knightley who first guesses the true relations between Frank and Jane and this shows him as a very good observer of human character.

In the opinion of Andrew H. Wright, sensible, proper, kind, open and vigorous are the attributes which most aptly describe George Knightley. If Emma had been led by Mr. Knightley's sense and propriety, she would not have committed the many blunders which make up the story. But her cleverness, charm, subtlety and wit are in conflict with the standard of values represented by Mr. Knightley till at last love opens her eyes to his real worth. Mr. Knightley who cares so much for propriety and who is the very soul of courtesy cannot bear to see his Emma doing improper things or any poor creature being hurt by another's arrogance. When at the Box Hill party, Emma in thoughtless gaiety makes fun of poor Miss Bates' garrulity, he can hardly control his anger. He takes the earliest opportunity to reprove her and she acts on his good advice by her repeated kindnesses to the simple old woman. The kindness and courteousness of Mr. Knightley are again brought out by his conduct at the Crown, when Mr. Elton and his wife join together in slighting and humiliating poor

Harriet. Seeing Elton expressing readiness to dance with any elderly woman in the room while pointedly refusing to dance with Harriet, Mr. Knightley immediately comes forward and leads her off to dance because he cannot bear to see her hurt. Though this is what he would have done for any poor girl in the same circumstances, Harriet is led into believing that he cares for. His repeated kindnesses to her are also the result of the same generous feelings though the simple girl misunderstands them. It is fortunate that Mr. Knightley never comes to know of the ambitious thoughts which Harriet had entertained on account of his kindness to her and which Emma had unwittingly encouraged. If he knew of it he would have been greatly pained.

Though Mr. Knightley was such a courteous gentleman who would not offend any person, there were limits to his sense of courtesy. This is proved by his smashing reply to Mrs. Elton who wants to be allowed to choose his guests for him. He first tries to be courteous by telling her not to trouble about inviting the guests, though he would expect her to bring Elton. But when she insists on her rights as a married woman and says she must have the authority to name his guests, his reply is quite firm. He says "there is but one married woman in the world whom I can ever allow to invite what guests she pleases to Donwell, and that one is Mrs. Knightley, and till she is in being, I will manage such matters myself."

Mr. Knightley is a typical English man, with a deep respect for the established social order. This is shown by his approval of the marriage between Robert Martin, his honest young yoeman and Harriet, the beautiful natural daughter of somebody. He knows that Harriet being a silly girl, Robert Martin is "as much her superior in sense as in situation." His respectful behaviour towards Mr. Woodhouse inspite of all his eccentricities is also partly based on the treatment due from one gentleman to another. If Harriet had any sense she would have known that it is inconceivable to think that a gentleman like Mr. Knightley should ever marry beneath himself.

His love for Emma is based on close association and friendship lasting ever so many years. He tells her he had loved her from the time she was thirteen. More than anybody else, he understands the core of goodness in her character and can bear with her in all her faults and mistakes. He is a sort of self-appointed guardian of Emma, ever ready to guide and advise her and he cannot help feeling jealous of Frank Churchill on whom Emma, for a time, bestows too much attention. But his delicacy will not permit him to interfere in the relations between Frank and Emma as he believes that Emma cares for the youngman. But as soon as he learns of the engagement between Frank and Jane, he hastens to Emma's side, with the generous intention of consoling her, only to find that she is heart-free and not in the least affected by Frank's engagement. This discovery makes him so overjoyed that he is led to speak of his own love and to his great surprise, Emma readily returns that love. We cannot help feeling that this is no more than this true gentleman has very well deserved. As we close the book we fervently hope that he may find all the happiness that true conjugal felicity can give.

Frank Churchill who was one of the boasts of Highbury, has "a hint of dash and flair about him" from the time that he is introduced in the story. He was living in comfort with his uncle and aunt, the Churchills, whose name he had taken as their adopted son. His coming to Highbury to visit his father had been so often talked of but never achieved so that there was among the Highbury folk, a lively curiosity to see him. His basic faults, selfishness and want of consideration are immediately discovered by Mr. Knightley when, after his highly prized letter to Mrs. Weston, he goes on postponing his visit. Speaking about the youngman's lack of resolution and inattention to duty, Mr. Knightley truthfully remarks, "There is one thing, Emma, which a man can always do, if he chooses, and that is, his duty......by vigour and resolution."

When he actually makes his appearance in Highbury at about the same time that Jane Fairfax is there to regain her

health in her native air, he is entirely pleasing, not only to Emma and the Westons but also to the whole of Highbury. Soon, however, certain chinks begin to appear in the armour of his personality. His unpleasant remarks to Emma about Jane Fairfax, and his leading her on to voice her suspicions about Jane's attachment to Dixon are certainly in bad taste. It may be alleged that his motive was to deceive Emma as to the true nature of his relations with Jane. Again we see that there is an air of foppery and nonsense about him, as is evident from his riding to London merely to have his hair cut.

It is in the final volume of the novel that Frank Churchill appears at his worst. His conduct towards Emma during the Box Hill party is quite inexcusable. Emma asks later "What right had he to come among us with affections engaged and manners so freely disengaged." For a man who was already secretly engaged to a worthy young lady, his manners were truly too disengaged and it is no wonder that after the Box Hill party, Jane decided to break with him. But as Frank is the child of good fortune everything finally works in his favour. Mrs. Churchill dies at a convenient moment and Frank is now able to announce his engagement without fear of being disinherited. Jane forgives him and the wedding is to take place as soon as the mourning for Mrs. Churchill is over.

Reviewing his character, the best we can say about Frank Churchill is that he is not a wicked man, inspite of all his deception and dishonesty. It is probably true, as Mr. Knightley hopes, that as the husband of such a good and steady girl as Jane Fairfax, he will become greatly improved in character.

Jane Fairfax with her reserve and her pathos, is a character whom Emma finds it very difficult to love. She is the orphaned child of one Captain Fairfax, brought up by the generous-hearted Colonel Campbell and his family. She comes to reside for a time with her poor aunt and grandmother, Miss Bates and Mrs. Bates, the latter being the widow of the late vicar of Highbury. She is young,

handsome and accomplished and her delicate health is to be recouped by the stay in her native Highbury. While living there she enjoys the reputation for an exemplary character and Mrs. Elton makes her special protegee. Not only Mrs. Elton, but also Mr. and Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley show great kindness and consideration to Miss Fairfax. But her coldness and her reserve make Emma to dislike her. This dislike is all the more heightened by Frank Churchill's exaggerating a very bad quality, real or supposed, that Jane possesses. Under his influence, Emma even feels that Jane is having an unlawful attachment to Mr. Dixon, the husband of Colonel Campbell's daughter.

Jane's reserve and her appearance of openness invite the curiosity not only of Emma, but also of a man like Mr. Knightley. He notices the signs of intelligence between her and Mr. Frank Churchill and almost discovers their secret. Jane's sufferings and her ill-health, especially on the eve of her proposed departure for Mrs. Smallridges house, earn for her the sympathy of such people as Mr. Knightley, the Westons and Emma, not to speak of the inevitable Mrs. Elton. Emma's repeated kindnesses are rejected by Jane who has reason to consider her as her greatest enemy and successful rival, especially after the Box Hill party. Emma, unable to understand the motive behind Jane's conduct, is greatly relieved when Jane treats her with open friendliness after the announcement of her engagement.

There was nothing that Jane Austen disliked more than every kind of concealment especially when it involved deceit. She disliked the secret engagement so much that she has not been able to depict the secret engagers with her usual powers of lifelike portraiture. Though Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are necessary to the plot because of their secret engagement, they are not important in any other respect. They are not among the characters we recall with pleasure long after we have read the book.

Mr. Woodhouse, the father of Emma is portrayed with hardly less ability than his daughter. He represents a type of character that is normally unlucky both in its companions

and in its portrayers. He is an egoist and a very trying fool, but there is much in him besides the self-coddler. He is grateful, affectionate, hospitable and courteous and even anxious about the health of his deplorably reckless acquaintance. He is the mildest of men in whom ceremony is associated with flutter in a very original and entertaining way. That he is the object of unrelaxing tenderness and esteem from people like the Knightleys who are possessed of every excuse for impatience speaks much in his favour. He has been called, not without some truth, "the most perfect gentleman in fiction.'' But according of John Bailey this is quite absurd when speaking of a novel in which Mr. Knightley is one of the characters. Bailey calls him "a dear old woman'' who is Emma's father and who provides some pleasant comic business. Like Miss Bates, Mr. Woodhouse may be considered as the personification of a humour in the old fashioned sense calculated to arouse much pleasant laughter.

Miss Bates' chatter is so lifelike that it would seem that the novelist had taken it down quickly, by shorthand as she spoke without ceasing. But no photographic representation could result in a miracle of creation like the character of Miss Bates, the silly, talkative old woman, whose heart is full of good and generous impulses. She is much more than a caricature as she has character enough to bear up her peculiarity. There is something comfortable and buxom about this spinister which is not to be found anywhere else in the novels of Miss Austen. She is characterised by an artless faith in the goodwill of her fellow-creatures which brightens her world. Everyone would find his character pleasingly embellished in the truthful geniality of Miss Bates' simple mind and would feel duly flattered.

The peculiarity by which all readers remember her is the quality of her speech. She is the type of the rambling "monologist but she differs from other members of her tribe in several respects. We can notice the 'Austen-trade mark' in the precision of her trim and almost formal volubility. Her speech does not congulate like that of Mrs. Nickelby.

She keeps the thread of her conversation even when she lets it dangle. Miss Austen does not, at times, hesitate to convey important information, through the progressive, if dilatory conversation of Miss Bates. In spite of her tiresome garrulity, her humility, generosity of feelings goodness of heart make her a very lovable character indeed.

The Westons. Mr. Weston, though personally rather tedious, is very interesting as a piece of literary craftsmanship. He is the best of man, being just, kind, cheerful, amiable, and talkative, though a little lavish in his talk and indiscriminate in his cheer. Bailey calls him the type of "the cheerful, amiable, optimistic, unimportant man whom we all know ; with nothing to do and always busy about doing it."

His wife, Mrs. Weston is a quiet and convincing figure of a very good woman. She is a person in whom all the virtues are neatly combined. Her relationship with her step-son Frank Churchill and her solicitude for his welfare and goodname, do her great credit.

The Eltons. Mr. Elton, the young and handsome vicar of Highbury and his snobbish wife are the most unpleasant characters in the novel. Mrs. Elton who is the more unpleasant of the two has no real business in the story, except to convince characters like Emma and Mr. Knightley of the bad taste of Elton in choosing such a wife. She is more foolish than comic. In other words she is more repulsive than amusing. Though she is secretly disliked and despised she is openly tolerated and deferred to by her neighbours including even Mr. Knightley and Emma. In Mrs. Elton's portrayal self-betrayal in made abnormally continuous. But her character is made quite real to us as long as she is in our company.

Mr. Elton is a better-drawn figure than his wife. He is Emma's choice for her dear Protegee. The creator of Reverend Mr. Collins saw no reason why Mr. Elton's profession should set any limits to his meanness. He is neither religious nor clerical. He is a handsome young man in whom

the sentimental and the mercenary are equally blended. By his good look and his smooth and winning manners he tries in vain to impress the young mistress of Hartfield who is all the time intending him for Harriet Smith Thwarted in his attempt to win Emma and mortified by her intending him for her young protegee, Mr. Elton retaliates by marrying the purse-proud and foolish Augusta Hawkins. He is condemned to spend the rest of his time "in the wake of his wife's train and in the lee of her vocabulary." In meanness and snobbishness, at least he has found his match in her. The insult to Harriet in the ballroom at the Crown, reveals all the pettiness and meanness of Mr. Elton's character and make us lose any little respect we might have had for him.

Harriet Smith is a beautiful young girl, whom accident of birth has placed in the neutral region between two social classes without firm footing in either. Miss Austen seems to have drawn Harriet in a kindly and magnanimous mood and so she emphasizes her good qualities scrupulously and studiously. She is a very simple girl, who, in keeping with the requirements of the time, affects judgement and discretion. But inspite of this affection of judgement and discretion, she is evidently school-girlish and that is the worst that can be said about her. She is not vulgar or flimsy and she bears her disappointments with unresentful patience. Mr. Knightley, on his better acquaintance with her, is compelled to retract many of his strictures against her. After all her disappointments, she deserved to be happy and secure in the love and care of an honest and hardworking yeoman like Robert Martin. But for her being misguided by her well-meaning patroness she would have unhesitatingly accepted him in the first instance. But then the story would not have been possible. The *John Knightleys*, husband and wife, serve as foils to Mr. Knightley and Emma. The character of the younger brother shows to advantage that of the elder one just as the mild and submissive character of Isabella, sets off the more spirited and charming one of her sister, Emma. In John Knightley a single trait is made the sum and substance of the portrayal

to the exclusion of other elements in the character. He is the possessor of an invaluable little temper which is made much of by the novelist. His ill-temper is very convincingly portrayed and the elder Knightley shines all the better by his side. Isabella has none of the spirit or liveliness of Emma and she is absorbed in the care of her husband and children. We feel that she is better suited than Emma to put up patiently with all the unexpected bursts of temper which her husband is capable of. Like Emma she is kind and considerate to those around her and very much attached to her father. But by the side of Emma, she pales into insignificance and cannot help being a little dull and lifeless.

Chapter XXV

JANE AUSTEN'S POWER OF MAKING COMMONPLACE THINGS INTERESTING AS EXEMPLIFIED BY EMMA

Speaking about Jane Austen's powers as a novelist, Sir Walter Scott wrote, "I have read again, and for the third time at least, Miss Austen's very finely written novel of *Pride and Prejudice.* That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements, and feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early !"

In this passage, Scott has rightly touched upon Jane Austen's most outstanding quality as a novelist. Those who look for the 'outre' and the extravagant, in her novels, will certainly be disappointed. People like Charlotte Bronte and Edward Fitzgerald, found her too tame and uninteresting. To quote the latter, "she never goes out of the Parlour......I cannot get on with Books about the Daily Life which I find rather insufferable in practice about me. I never could read Miss Austen...given me people, Places, and Things, which I don't and can't see ; Antiquaries, Jeanie Deans, Dalgetty etc."

All Jane Austen's readers, both admirers and detractors alike, notice in her choice of subject-matter a deliberate limitation and smallness of range. Though her detractors cannot find anything of surpassing value in the life of the country-gentry, the truth is that Jane Austen's scope is

quite adequate to the exposition of important themes. She has taken as subject for her art a certain segment of society not merely because it is the safest thing for her to write about but also because it is "the delight of her life." She expressed her sense of her novelist's need to select emphatically when she advised her niece who was trying her hand at novel-writing, to stay within the social world which was familiar to her. She added that three or four families in a country-village was the very thing to work on.

We are surprised to find that all the six great novels of Jane Austen deal with very ordinary people in very commonplace situations. Charlotte Bronte complains of the absence of the "stormy sisterhood of the passions" from her novels. They all deall with everyday occurrences in the lives of ordinary people in quiet country-villages like those Jane Austen knew intimately. Like the novelist's life, her novels are among the quietest in the world. Yet she manages to make them really interesting because of "the truth of the description and the sentiment" and because of the gift for comedy which she possesses abundantly.

Emma which is second only to *Pride and Prejudice* among Jane Austen's novels is a quiet story of some quiet people in country-village called Highbury. It has a good-natured, placid quality reflected in the character of its heroine. The atmosphere of the novel is cheerful. The people are healthy, prosperous and good-natured sort, generally. Nobody, except, perhaps, the Knightleys, has much to do. There is a poverty of incident and lack of bustle about this story as about the life of the Highbury-folk portrayed in it.

The most exciting event in this story is that of the secret engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. Miss Austen speaks of it with solemnity, in the tone appropriate to a defalcation or a burglary. But the reader is not made aware of this till about three-fourths of the story is told. Meanwhile the reader is allowed to

pick up much amusement from other sources. One of these is the semblance of a love-affair between Frank Churchill and Emma Woodhouse. This however is soon consigned to the dustheap, as it is an affair of pure imagination on the woman's part and of pure simulation on the man's.

There is a young girl Harriet Smith, who is induced by her benevolent but short-sighted patroness, Emma, to transfer her affections from an honest and sensible farmer who is her social, equal and mental superior to a young clergyman who airs his want of sense in a socially superior circle. The young clergyman meanwhile proposes to the patroness and is promptly refused with rage and indignation. The heart of the young protegee is slowly transferred by its own volition to the country-landowner, Mr. Knightley. The landowner who is deeply in love with the young patroness remains entirely unconscious of the flutterings of the silly girl's heart on his account. At last the heart of Harriet is "returned with the strictest probity to its original possessor, the young farmer. This kind of chain-work of ordinary events is what we get in *Emma.* We are told how the young clergyman, having been refused by the patroness, proceeds with vindictive promptitude to court and win fashion and folly in the form of a snobbish young woman whom he has met in Bath. This wife of the clergyman secures a job as governess for Jane Fairfax, the young lady who is secretly engaged to the handsome and aristocratic Frank Churchill. Though Jane accepts the job one evening in a fit of despair, she cancels it in a few days when the misunderstanding between her and her young man is cleared. The clergyman's wife who is not very important from the point of view of the plot, provides much comic entertainment for the readers with her self-importance and snobbery. It is delightful to hear her flying into raptures over the richness and comfort of life in the house of her brother-in-law, Mr. Suckling, a very consequential man with extensive grounds and a barouche-landau. Mrs. Elton keeps the readers amused till the discovery of the secret engagement can provide them with some excitement.

Meanwhile we are shown how quietly but steadily, a love-affair of a calm, slow and uneventful nature, is taking shape between Mr. Knightley, the county-landowner and the daugther of his neighbouring landowner who have known each other from the childhood of the heroine. For long, this love has been disguised as the closest of friendship or masquerading as a feud. But at last when the heroine hears her protegee, Harriet confessing her love for Mr. Knightley and her belief that he took a special interest in her, it darts through her with the speed of an arrow that no one but herself should marry Mr. Knightley. It is not long before Emma is relieved from her painful state of suspense. Mr. Knightley in a very affecting manner reveals his love for her and Emma's response is most becoming though Jane Austen does not tell us exactly what Emma's words on the occasion were. She discreetly tells us that that Emma said what a lady always says on such an occasion. Soon marriage-bells are ringing for Harriet Smith and her patroness, Emma Woodhouse and the marriage between the secret engagers, Jane and Frank is not far off. The story ends with the characteristic comments of Mrs. Elton on there being little parade and only very small quantities of white satin and lace kerchiefs at the wedding.

In a story of this kind there is of course no event or character that rise above the level of ordinary existence. Yet the novel is among the greatest in the language, because, observing a corner of life so clearly and describing it so exquisitely as Jane Austen has done in *Emma*, is no mean achievement. Though Jane Austen's range is small she has roused enthusiastic admiration in the hearts of several generations because her art is so near perfection. Even a severe critic like Charlotte Bronte admits "the Chinese fidelity and scrupulous delicacy of her truthful pictures of life among the gentry in the country-villages she has immortalised." To read a work of art so beautifully and economically done as *Emma*, compels joy in the heart; and those who feel this joy can hardly speak of it without a happy ring in their voice."

It is true that those who look upon literature as a substitute for religion will not find Jane Austen's novels very instructive. But all the sermons of moralists can never persuade the admirers of Jane Austen that this admiration for her art as exemplified in *Emma*, is exaggerated or misplaced. Those who really praise and value a novelist's art, must praise and value her's because it has the beauty of an unusually acute vision perfectly expressed as art, with the most exquisite precision, with the broadest human sympathy, and with the most lively humour. This is what makes her delineation of commonplace things so interesting as the ball at the Crown or the picnic to Box Hill or the strawberry party at Donwell Abbey in *Emma*.

Chapter XXVI

CRITICAL OPINIONS

"Her terminology, of scene, social order, events, setting, is precise; but its symbolism is universal because it can everywhere be recognised and accepted as valid."

—Richard Church.

"Jane Austen obeys the first rule of all imaginative composition, that she stays within the range of her imaginative inspiration." *—Lord David Cecil.*

"There is a whole larger world outside it of which she says nothing, but that does not invalidate the world she has made. The scope of her art is not in fact lessened by her ignoring of the major events in the history of her time: the reality of her world would not have been in any way intensified had she dragged in references to the Napoleonic Wars to the Industrial Revolution." *—Allen.*

"Jane Austen is thus a mistress of much deeper emotion than appears upon the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind and endows with the most enduring form of life-scenes which are outwardly trivial. Always the stress is laid upon character." *—Virginia Woolf.*

"She has been condemned as cold and petty because in all her works she turned her back on the stage of contemporary history where such vast transformations were being posed. But such criticism of this superb artist is blunt-fingered." *—Church.*

"All that Bentham or Cobbett saw in England, she leaves out of view. For her there existed no French Revolution, no public abuses, no history. She ignores all

ranks above that of the baronet, or solid rich landlord (Cobbett's 'fundlord'), and below the lowest middle class; seldom draws servants, being too much of a lady to have the backstair consciousness that troubles Thackeray ; avoids country-folk ; and never admits an artist or man of letters into her pages." —*Oliver Elton.*

"Pride and Prejudice has not only the humour of Shakespearean comedy, but also its technique...........The marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy is not merely a possible solution of the plot, it is as inveritable as the conclusion of a properly constructed syllogism or geometrical demonstration. For a parallel workmanship of this high order, one can look only to Shakespeare, to such a comedy as "*Much Ado About Nothing.*" —*Cross.*

"Jane Austen is endowed in the highest degree with the one essential gift of the novelist, the power to create living characters. It is true that she only draws them in their private aspect. But this is not a superficial aspect. A man's relation to his wife and children is at least as important a part of his life as his relation to his beliefs and career : and reveals him as fundamentally."

—*Lord David Cecil.*

"Of the wisdom of knowing how to work within a limited range, Jane Austen's works are the triumphant proof—she gives us no blurred, formless panorama, but a neat, perfectly composed, sharply focused picture. And she shows that it is not width of vision but depth that is important. In the small section of humanity that she has chosen to depict, she has given us the greatest of English comic characters." —*Robert Liddell.*

"There is, in her a disengagement, an objectivity which is not scientific, because not disinterested. In fact, she is deeply concerned with both aspects of the contradictions she perceives : searching the orchards of human experience she finds the bitter-sweet fruit of confusing appearance and ambiguous essence, and she becomes a person of the divided, the ironic, vision." —*Andrew H. Wright.*

"She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese Fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood." —*Charlotte Bronte.*

"Jane Austen could write at twenty as well, or better, or very nearly as well, as at forty." —*Garrod.*

"Jane Austen had an extraordinary perspicacious and sensitive understanding, not of women only, but of men as well. Notwithstanding her sheltered life and the moderate amount of her learnings, she was deeply and clearly to the springs of action, and understood the finest shades of feeling and motive." —*Harold Childe.*

"I do not think that plot, as plot, ever does much matter, provided it gives a reasonably probable and symmetrical frame-work within which character and sentiment can have free play. Jane Austen's straight-waistcoats do not seem to hamper the free movement of her limbs."

—*R. W. Chapman.*

"The contemporary novel may give us the passing fashions of the hour: the classical novel would not be classical if it did not give us the things which are not only of this hour but of all hours, human life as it is and always has been. No one now doubts that Jane Austen does that. There is an admirable phrase, used by Mr. Saintsbury of Moliere, which exactly describes her achievement. She 'sets the way of the world in a comic light of the eternity'."

—*John Bailey.*

Chapter XXVII

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. To what extent can Emma be regarded as a comedy of errors ?

Answer. As W. L. Cross has pointed out in his book on "The Development of the English Novel" there is in Jane Austen's novels, a delicate psychological humour akin to the higher comedy of Shakespeare. This arises from the novelist's success in showing how the higher conduct of men and women results from their being dupes of misconceptions. One takes up a funny notion and lets it run away with him as when the Rev. Collins believes that his beautiful cousin, Elizabeth Bennet will be overjoyed at the idea of becoming his wife. He is too obtuse to realise that a smart and intelligent girl like Elizabeth, can have nothing but contempt for him. In *Emma* we have a heroine who believes herself in the secret of everybody's feelings and tries to arrange people's lives for them. There are in Jane Austen's novels, many other irrepressible match-makers, who want to play God and to shape the destinies of their friends and neighbours. Invariably, such people commit ludicrous mistakes which provide much entertainment for the readers. The readers, being in the secret, can watch with pleasure, the mistaken and mistaking actors moving in shadows and half-lights while the truth is partially or wholly concealed from them. The novelist deals with them very much in the manner of the writer of comedy and in the most ironic situations where they are made to commit egregious blunders we cannot help exclaiming, "Lord, what fools these mortals be."

More than any other novel of Jane Austen, *Emma* can be called a comedy of errors. The business of getting people engaged and married is one of the primary concerns of Jane

Austen in her novels and particularly so in *Emma.* All the six great novels she had written illustrate this preoccupation of the novelist with the ideas of love, courtship and marriage. This has, in fact, made critics like Garrod to accuse her of having only one plot which is made to do duty for five or six novels through endless cuttings, trimmings and refashionings. But whatever her detractors might say on the subject, Jane Austen has been able to write six very enjoyable novels on variations of the same theme, so to say. *Emma,* one of the most delightful of her novels, and second in importance only to *Pride and Prejudice,* is also greatly concerned with the business of getting people engaged and married. Almost everybody in the novel is busy about this all-important pursuit and almost everybody blunders so that the story becomes an agreeable comedy of match-making errors.

At the opening of the novel, we are introduced to the heroine, Emma Woodhouse, young, beautiful, rich and clever, with a comfortable home and happy disposition. Being idle and not a little vain of her social position and her superior judgment she is tempted to play Cupid to her friends and neighbours. She is determined to try her hand at match-making inspite of the warnings of her true and sensible friend, Mr. Knightley, the squire of Donwell Abbey. She says she will be content with making a match for Mr. Elton, the young and handsome vicar of Highbury and that after that she will give up the business. Knightley's sensible answer to this is that a young man of six or seven-and-twenty should be able to choose a wife for himself and should, therefore, be left to do it his own way. But Emma, whose heart is set on the pleasurable business of match-making does not heed his words. She is helped in her scheme by the appearance on the scene, of just such a girl as she thinks would be a good match for Mr. Elton. Mrs. Goddard, who keeps a boarding-school for young ladies, asks permission to introduce at Hartfield, one Harriet Smith, the beautiful natural daughter of somebody who has been with her long and has grown into an agreeable young lady. Harriet is promptly invited

by Emma to Hartfield where she spends her time mostly in the company, not only of Emma herself, but also of Mr. Elton who is a frequent visitor there. During the many meetings between Harriet and Mr. Elton, Emma tries to encourage the young vicar to pay special attention to the charms of her protegee, Harriet, and thinks she is succeeding. What actually happens is that Mr. Elton feels himself more and more encouraged by Emma to become attached to her. The story progresses through many ironic situations and incidents which convince Emma that Mr. Elton would soon be making his proposal to Harriet who has already been persuaded by her to reject a suitor, Robert Martin, the gentleman-farmer of Donwell Abbey Farm, as being not good enough for her. Harriet readily transfers her affections to Mr. Elton, the young and self-seeking clergyman who airs his want of sense in a politer circle than that of honest Rober Martin. But Emma suffers a rude shock, when, alone with her in the carriage after the Westons' Christmas party, Mr. Elton proposes to her. She finds that her pride and her insight have both suffered in thus being discovered as the object of Mr. Elton's attentions. Harriet is terribly disappointed, especially when she hears the news of Mr. Elton's marriage to a fashionable and rich Miss Hewkins at Bath, within a few weeks. Thus Emma fails miserably in her first attempt at match-making. Emma's first fancy thus having been dissipated in anger and self-reproach, a second fancy is shown hovering in her mind. This consists in the assumption of a special relation to Frank Churchill, the young and agreeable son of Mr. Weston, as soon as he arrives at Highbury. Emma's defence of Frank Churchill in her conversation with Mr. Knightley arouses the unconscious jealousy of the older man and Emma tries to laugh away his annoyance. The coming of Miss Bates on the scene and her announcing the arrival of her niece, Jane Fairfax, in Highbury, leads to Emma's third fancy that this reserved young woman is harbouring an unlawful love for Mr. Dixon, the husband of her benefactor's daughter. Frank Churchill, eminently ready to meet Emma halfway in flirtation, fools her about Jane to the top of her bent during the party at the Coles's. As

she talks blandly with Mrs. Weston and lays it down that Mr. Knightley should never marry, her state of vanity is ripe for disaster. During their meeting at the Bates's, Frank's facetiousness misleads Emma completely while it pleases Jane secretly. After the preparations for a ball at the Crown have evidently brought Emma and Frank closer together to the great delight of the Westons, Frank abruptly leaves Highbury in a great state of agitation. Emma is left to embroider the theme of her second fancy into an unimpassioned love-motive during his absence.

Next we see Emma pondering the state of her own heart and finally fancying herself out of love with Frank Churchill as easily as she has fancied herself in love. Her match-making instinct is again roused and she decides to bestow upon Harriet the place in Frank's heart which she has so coolly resigned With the return of Frank Churchill and the arrival of Mrs. Elton in Highbury a little earlier, events move fast. We now witness the turning round of the fates upon Emma who has been trying to order the lives of other people around her. Soon after the ball at the Crown, there is Hrrriet's encounter with the gipsies and she appears at Hartfield fainting in Frank Churchill's arm. At this Emma's ideas of a match between Harriet and Frank Churchill burst into insolent growth. Harriet's confession of a new attachment and Emma's misunderstanding of her supposed confidence help the growth of this new fancy. Mr. Knightley confides to Emma how he has noticed signs of intelligence between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax and expresses his view that the two may be secretly in love. But Emma who has full confidence in her own insight into character, declares that a love between Frank and Jane is quite inconceivable. During the strawberry party at Donwell and the picnic on Box Hill we find Emma flirting most shamelessly with Frank Churchill and in the exuberance of thoughtless high spirits she behaves very rudely to Miss Bates. For this Mr. Knightley reproves her very severely and she goes home very repentant and humbled.

The next part of the story, where the misunderstanding between Jane and Frank is cleared, completes the humiliation of Emma. She has once again been proved quite stupid in her match-making schemes. She is very much worried about the way she is to console Harriet who has been repeatedly misguided by her. But Harriet, the submissive and patronised, now deals Emma the heaviest blow when she confesses her attachment to Mr. Knightley. Emma can neither disbelieve nor discourage this silly girl who has the presumption to believe herself loved by Mr. Knightley. The vain and conceited Emma is now abased to the ground and she is left repenting of all her follies and reflecting grimly on the bleakness of the future. But almost without warning Mr. Knightley now appears at Hartfield and in the course of a few minutes the bleakness of despair is turned into the exultation of triumphant happiness as he makes his declaration of love to Emma. This young lady who had all along been foolishly making matches for other people, without realising how her own happiness depended on her marrying this worthy gentlemen now awakens to self-knowledge and the happiness of love. But her many blunders and the irony of the situations into which her match-making leads her, make the novel a veritable comedy of errors which offers great entertainment for the readers.

Q. "Sympathy with some of her characters, Jane Austen has, identify never. She stands aloof." Discuss.

Answer. Speaking about the materials and themes of Jane Austen's novels, A.H. Wright says : "Of the contradictions in human experience, Jane Austen has a perception which yields a detachment and a detachment which grants a perception. There is, in her disengagement, an objectivity which is not scientific, because not disinterested. In fact she is deeply concerned with both aspects of the contradictions she perceives. Searching the orchards of human experience she finds the bitter sweet fruit of confusing appearance and ambiguous essence and she becomes a person of the divided, the ironic, vision."

Evidently such a writer of the ironic vision could never identify herself with any of her characters, good or bad. She has too much detachment and objectivity to do anything of the kind. It is true that though she is very much interested in her characters, she has a detachment which grants her a perception of the good and the bad in her men and women. She could never have been able to do this if she had identified herself completely with her characters. She appraises coolly and judges impartially because she never loses herself in any particular character.

Reading through her six great novels, we can very well understand that Jane Austen had her particular favourites among the children of her imagination. She sympathised with all her heroines and her warm human sympathy was not completely withheld even from her bad characters like Henry Crawford and Mrs. Norris. But however deep her sympathy with a particular character happened to be, it was never great enough to make her blind to the faults and drawbacks of that character. In other words Jane Austen, in her portrayal of human character, was too much of a realist and too much of an impartial observer of human life. Being a realist she never idealises her characters to any great extent. Being an impartial observer of humanity, she sees men and women as they are, neither angels nor devils incarnate. The fact that though she sympathises with some of her characters, she does not identify herself with anyone of them can be proved by an analysis of the heroines of her novels alone.

Her first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility* presents to us two heroines Elinor and Marianne who are sisters exemplifying two opposite points of view. It is evident that the novelist understands and sympathises with both characters, that of the sensible and prudent, Elinor and that of Marianne's extreme sensibility in which prudence has no place. But she does not identify herself with either character. She shows us that sense does not solve every problem just as sensibility alone cannot bring lasting happiness. Through the characters of the two sisters and their fortunes which the novelist places before us, we are

to conclude that neither sense nor sensibility is adequate for happiness in life. The two Dashwood sisters who exemplify sense and sensibility are treated as ironic symbols and with neither of them Jane Austen identifies herself.

The description of Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, shows how detached and objective is her creator. Jane Austen says about her : "Her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affectation of any kind, her manner just removed from the awardness and shyness of a girl ; her person pleasing, and when in good looks, pretty, and her mind about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen unsually is. Clearly there is no question of the novelist's identifying herself with a character described with such cool objectivity though there is sympathy and understanding in the characterisation.

Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, is again very much liked by her creator though Jane Austen does not go to the extent of identifying herself with her heroine. Fanny's character, too, is critically analysed and Jane Austen comments ironically on her behaviour when she is agonised with jealousy and does not want to admit it even to herself. Edmund Bertran whom she loves secretly, has taken her rival for a ride on her horse and she is kept waiting impatiently for her turn. Her jealousy and irritation find vent in a sudden spurt of indignation at the cruel way they are treating the horse. "She began to think it rather hard upon the mare to have such double duty ; if she were forgotten, the poor mare should be remembered." Such delicate strokes of irony have no place in characterisation where the novelist identifies herself with her characters. Jane Austen who never identifies herself with any of her characters can treat them all with justice and impartiality. It prevents her from idealising any of her people. Even the best among them, like Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot, have their faults. Though Fanny Price is unselfish and highminded Jane Austen shows us that her very strictness of principle was liable to make her unjust to her more frivolous rival. The novelist is equally honest and impartial

about the characters she did not like. She evidently loathed Mrs. Norris as all her reader do. Yet she impartially points out that the same meddling energy which made her so disagreeable would have enabled her to cope with the difficulties of a poor sailors' wife who had to manage a large family, much better than Mrs. Price.

Again in portraying a character like Emma with whom she sympathises without identifying herself with her creation, we see that her detached objectivity enables her to see her heroine exactly as she is. All Emma's faults are critically viewed and analysed and we are made to see how she is the victim of her own misconceptions. But the novelist takes care to show us that with all her faults, Emma is quite lovable, because she is essentially noble and high-minded and cares for simplicity and honesty and true tenderness of heart as much as her admirer, the worthy Mr. Knightley. Here again, it is evident, that there is sympathy and insight into human character in the delineation of Emma's character. It is precisely because the novelist refuses to identify herself with the heroine that she is able to portray her as she really is—a very lovable, but a very imperfect human-being. The same sympathy is shown in the delineation of two other characters in the novel, Miss Bates and Mr. Woodhouse. Both of them are delightful bores on whom the novelist has lavished her human sympathy and her artistic powers. Jane Austen evidently loved her garrulous old maid and the valetudinarian of courteous manners whom she has presented to us with warm human sympathy and the most detached objectivity.

Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot are universally acclaimed as the most attractive of Jane Austen's heroines and yet neither of them is by any means perfect. Elizabeth is by far the cleverest, wittiest, liveliest and most like Jane Austen, among her creations. The novelist wrote of her: "I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print: how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her, at least, I do not know." In spite of the fact that Miss Austen loved Elizabeth Bennet

so much she did not identify herself completely with her heroine. On the other hand, she gives us an objective account of this most delightful of her heroines who runs away with our hearts and heads, at the same time. In Anne Eliot, the heroine of *Persuasion*, we have one of the most lovable of Jane Austen's heroines, one who easily runs away with our hearts. It is said that in the character of Anne Eliot, there is much more identification of the novelist with her creation, than in the heroines of the earlier novels. To quote Bailey, "Here in this very book, her one romance, she is as sure as ever that duty is duty and that no high flown talk about sentiment and passion can turn wrong into right or right into wrong. She actually goes so far, it is to be noticed, as to justify sense against sensibility even in this story in which, it would seem, sense had done all the mischief, for she makes Anne, at the very end, look back and say quite definitely that, however much mistaken Lady Russell had been in giving her the advice which caused her years of loveliness and sorrow, she herself had been right to follow it." So we may say we see a little of the woman in Jane Austen and her preference and prejudices from the kind of heroine she presents, in her very last novel. But even Shakespeare, the world's greatest dramatist, is not entirely free from self-revelation of this kind in his plays : We cannot, on that account say that Shakespeare is identifying himself with anyone of his characters, however much he may sympathise with them. On account of her great objectivity in her characterisation, Jane Austen enjoys pointing out life's little ironies. She shows us how *Anne Eliot* repeatedly says and does things exactly calculated, to defeat her secret hopes and block her way to happiness and enjoys this pleasant use of irony. It would not have been possible if she had completely identified herself with her heroine.

Thus we find, from an examination of the characters of Jane Austen's novels, that though she may have sympathy with some of her characters, she has no identity with none of them and that she remains completely detached from all her creations. An analysis of the other characters whom

she has grouped round the heroines of her novels, also will help to confirm the view that Miss Austen is quite detached in her attitude to her character.

Q. Write a note on the social world painted by Jane Austen.

Answer. The novels of Jane Austen provide interesting social history being illustrative of country-life among the upper middle classes in Southern England at the end of the eighteenth century. The fact that they can be viewed on the didactic and ironic levels too does not in any way diminish their value as social documents dealing with the life and manners of a bygone age and society. A novel written more than a hundred years ago provides a sort of escape from the contemporary and the familiar in social life to the fashions and formalities of an age that is goneby. These fashions and formalities are interesting for us because we no longer see them practised in the modern world. When we read Jane Austen's novels it is both interesting and instructive to come across sayings and doings which reflect the manners of the country gentry in England at the end of the eighteenth century.

It is indeed a very narrow segment of contemporary society that Jane Austen pictures for us in her novels. She does not, by any means give us a full picture of even the narrow segment of society to which her novels are confined. She hardly ever lets us see what the lower classes are like. Of course, there are servants and dependents making their appearance whenever necessary, at Mansfield Park, at Hartfield, at Barton Cottage and even in Portsmouth because the kind of people, presented by Jane Austen could not do without them. But though their existence is implied, they are hardly ever seen or heard. Emma is said to be kind to the poor but the objects of her charity are not presented to us. Even the yeomanry to which honest Robert Martin belongs is kept almost out of sight and we are not allowed to see even the letter which the gentleman-farmer has written to Harriet Smith though it is discussed

at length. Emma refuses to have anything but a distant glimpse of Robert Martin and the social class he belongs to. As for the aristocracy, Jane Austen hardly brings it in except when she wants to satirise characters like Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the Honourable John Yates or the Dowager Viscountess Darlymple and her daughter. Thus we are mainly left with the country-gentry, the class of people Jane Austen knew best and could portray most truthfully. She occasionally includes in this class such people as the Coles and Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner.

It is not surprising that in Jane Austen's novels the life of the country-gentry is not portrayed in all its aspects. We see only just as much of it as a very keenly observant woman could have taken in. We regret having lost sight of some of the fashions and formalities of the age and class to which we are introduced by Jane Austen. But there are some other things belonging to this class and age which we rejoice in having got rid of. For instance, we see that a lot of fuss was made in these days about rank and precedence as seen from the conduct of people like Sir Walter Elliot and Mary Musgrove and Emma Woodhouse, the last named considering it beneath her dignity to step into the house of the yeoman farmer, Robert Martin. In fact, we now go too far in the direction of discarding all formality in manners. People of the present day who are used to the quick and easy scattering of Christian names among friends and acquaintances would be surprised to hear Mrs. Musgrove referring to her daughter-in-law as Mrs. Charles and Sir Walter speaking of his daughter as Miss Elliot or Sir Thomas Bertran calling his son Mr. Bertran. It is, however, a matter of regret that we, in the modern age, have lost the habit of using "Sir" or "Madam" in the way, Dr. Johnson and Miss Austen could use them to great advantage even in talking with social inferiors. Mary Musgrove speaking to the waiter at Lyme asks : "Pray, Sir, did not his servant say whether he belonged to the Kellynch family ?" We have to admit that it was not only gracious but also quite convenient to be able to use "Sir" and "Madame" like this, when we were not aware of the name of the person addressed.

On the other hand, there are certain things about the social life of Miss Austen's day which we will not wish to revive. For instance, there was the old practice of mourning which compelled Miss Elliot to wear black for a second cousin's wife, whom she had never seen. Again, no one will now tolerate a landlord like Sir Walter who takes such a high line about letting his house as when he loftily remarks: "I am not particularly disposed to favour a tenant. The Park would be open to him, of course, and few navy officers or men of any other description can have had such a range: but what restrictions I might impose on the use of the pleasure grounds is another thing. I am not fond of the idea of my shrubberies being always approachable: and I should recommend Miss Elliot to be on her guard with respect to her flower garden." In the modern age no house-owner could dictate terms like this to a tenant or could compel him to "keep to the paths" of the house he has rented.

Another thing we note about the society described in Jane Austen's novels is that it had the same contempt for sport common in the eighteenth century and reflected in the writings of Addison who made his Tory fox-hunter a fool and Gibbon who sarcastically described the society in a country-house as consisting of Lord Egremont and four-score fox-hounds. Jane Austen's remark about the sporting activities of Sir John Meddleton, Charles Musgrove, and others are by no means complimentary. One other feature of contemporary social life reflected in her novels, is the importance given to Bath as the popular resort of the fashionable and pleasure-seeking world. Mrs. Elton waxes eloquent in recounting the pleasures of Bath and is presumptuous enough to offer to introduce Emma to the fashionable society there.

All that is related in Jane Austen's novels is of the ordinary social intercourse of the gentry, with the emphasis on the part played by women in this. *Emma*, which is typical of Jane Austen's art in its most mature form, is a quiet story of village-folk quietly told. The greatest excitement in the quiet life of Highbury is provided by a

secret engagement and the life of the gentry is entirely taken up with making and receiving visits, dining out or having dinner-parties or card-parties at home or attending a Christmas party like the one at Randalls or a strawberry party like the one at Donwell Abbey. A ball at the village inn and picnics like the one to Boxhill or private theatricals like the one arranged in Mansfield Park, were other means of passing the time agreeably. As for the clergymen represented in the novels, they do not seem to be possessed of any zeal for the cure of souls. Their calling is often merely an excuse for having an easy time and for being admitted to better social circles than they are born to. Rev. Collins, being a parson is admitted to Lady Catherine's household and Mr. Elton, for the same reason, is welcomed at Hartfield. There is hardly any religion in any of Jane Austen's novels and no deep spiritual insights or theological speculations characterise her clergymen. It is characteristic of the severe limits which the novelist sets herself that she does not even suggest the reactions on her characters, of the great events of the day. Neither the French Revolution, nor the Napoleonic wars seems to have made any impression on her characters. The peace which came at the end of the war with Napoleon was only important to Jane Austen in so far as it brought home Captains to make love to young ladies who had waited for them and Admirals to rent country-houses for their residence. What Pitt and Fox and Castlereagh, Nelson and Wellington did or said, had nothing to do with Jane Austen or the quiet people she delineated in her novels. She seems to have been quite aware of the fact that individual men and women, as they are always have been, and always will be, are the true subject of the novelist and not theories or propaganda of any kind, political, social or religious. Hence she refuses to be preoccupied with the political, social or religious moments of her day. In portraying her heroes, she is not concerned with anything except their qualifications for being considered as good husbands and worthy gentlemen. Political and other theories and ideas are deliberately eschewed in Jane Austen's novels. When Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney begin to talk on the subject of politics, it is "an easy step to

silence." Though Jane Austen's period was that of the first generation of Romantic poets of the French Revolution and War of American Independence, of Malthus, Wordsworth, Scott, Schelling, Hegel, Coleridge, Napoleon, Andrew Jackson, William Wilberforce and James Fenimore Cooper, country-life in her part of the world was hardly disturbed by contemporary events. Jane Austen had two brothers in the Royal Navy, who later became admirals. She had a cousin whose 'emigre' husband was guillotined in the Terror. She was quite familiar with the writings of Godwin, Goethe, Wordsworth, Scott, Southey and Byron and she was not untouched by them. But they have not influenced her novels except in providing material for passing references or descriptions.

The novels of Jane Austen are to be looked upon as pleasant comedies in which she has portrayed the social life of her times. Very early in her life Miss Austen realised that the manners and the culture to which she had been accustomed in her own house, were by no means universal and that much lower standards might be observed among the gentry in their large country-houses. She realised that very often these wealthy and powerful landowners were not conscious of their own shortcomings and considered themselves better-bred than anybody else. In their estimation a man who has to work for his livelihood must rank much lower than landowners like themselves who formed the leisured class. They considered country-parsons little better than Parson Adams or Parson Trulliber, of whom many examples were still to be found in the contemporary world. As matter of policy, the parson may be shown a pretence of equality and he might occasionally dine with the squire instead of with the waiting woman. It was not to be expected that he should marry a lady as is seen from the following words of Lady Catherine to Mr. Collins whom she patronised : "A clergyman like you must marry. Choose properly, choose a gentlewoman for my sake ; and for your own, let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high." In *Mansfield Park*, we find Mary Crawford speaking with contempt of parsons and pointing out how

they were formerly very inferior even to what they are at the time. Again, we have the characteristic exclamation of Sir Walter Elliot : "Wentworth ! Oh ! Ah !—the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term gentleman. I thought you were speaking of some man of property". These quotations show how Jane Austen, a country-parson's daughter must have resented the snobbery and arrogance of the gentry in their attitude to the clergy. Her prejudice against these rich and titled people who were lacking in true refinement is reflected in the "Pride of Pemberley, the arrogance of Rosings, the cupidity of Morland, the rustic conviviality of Barton, the instability of Mansfield, the tasteless splendour of Sotherton, the mediocrity of Uppercross, the snobbery of Kellynch." This prejudice of Jane Austen is again reflected in bad qualities of her rich people, the avarice of General Tilney, the oafishness of Lord Osborne, the stupidity and arrogance of Lady Catherine and the insipidity of Lady Darlymple and Miss Carteret. Only in Mr. Knightley and Colonel Brandon we have two truly worthy representatives of the gentry against whom nothing can be said.

In the social life painted by Miss Austen, it is not only the rich who come in for castigation. The vulgarity of characters like the Steeles, the Thorpes and the Eltons is often used to set off the low standards prevailing among their letters. Jane Austen's genius for comedy, found repeated expression in showing how the landed gentry considered themselves superior, while in fact, they were not.

All Jane Austen's novels are about people who move around the parsonage and the manor-house because this is the world she knows best. But though the parsonage was the background of her own life, she does not give us an intimate glimpse of life in a parsonage. It is true, Catherine Morland came from a parsonage and that three of Miss Austen's heroines marry parsons. Though we are told of people calling at the parsonages and of important scenes taking place in parsonage parlours like the one at Hunsford, we do not get any idea of the general texture of life in a country-clergyman's family. Of his official duties, we are

given stray hints in *Emma* where Mr. Elton is described as preaching sermons, attending parish meetings and visiting a poor man's cottage. Jane Austen's clergymen, in general, are village-clergymen and a young man of fair ability and good character like Edmund Bertran, could in her day, if he had no natural disinclination be a good parish priest. Her considered views on the duties of a parish priest, we find, are expressed by Sir Thomas Bertram though all parish priests of the day did not strictly follow them.

Jane Austen's object in writing her novels was to paint "pictures of domestic life in country-villages" and she considered "three or four families in a country-village as the very thing to work on. Choosing a village or country-house as the scene of her story, she set out to paint for us her pictures of domestic life. In so doing she succeeded in giving some idea of the social life of the country-gentry in her day. It suited the novelist to take her heroine to Bath or London occasionally, but the rural background is always preserved. Jane Austen who never got out of the parlour cannot follow her youngmen into their various fields of activity which were not those of a woman. William Price, like Othello, could be made to speak of his adventures and Captain Wentworth to glance at the perils and hardships of the naval service. Similarly, we hear of William Larkins, Knightley's man, waiting to have speech with the squire regarding the management of his business. But with such side-lights, we have to content ourselves regarding things which happen in a purely masculine society. Jane Austen who watched the comedy of human life without ever getting out of her parlour, found it amusing as well as moving and she has succeeded in painting it as seen through the eyes of a keenly observant woman.

Q. "Every reader of Jane Austen is struck by her surprising air of modernity." Substantiate.

Answer. In his work "A Treatise on the Novel," Robert Liddell compares Jane Austen to Miss Compton Burnett as a writer of the pure novel. As a writer of a

pure novel who concentrates upon human-beings and their mutual reactions, she is more modern than any of her immediate predecessors or contemporaries in the field of fiction. Like the modern novelists Jane Austen has shown that any material could, with proper treatment, give us excellent novels and that the possibilities of the novel are practically illimitable.

In her universality of appeal and striking air of modernity, Jane Austen has often been compared to writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare. R. W. Chapman says about her : "I suppose every reader of Jane Austen who is familiar with the novels of Fanny Burney or Maria Edgeworth is struck by her surprising air of modernity. It is a quality that she shares with other great imaginative writers. Her modernity is like Chaucer's or Shakespeare's, the effect of her truth. When we say that Shakespeare is of all time, we mean that human nature is of all time and that Shakespeare has told the truth about it. Lesser writers seem more remote because, to the distance of time, to differences of manners and language, they add a false distance that comes of imperfect vision and inadequate powers of interpretation. The greatest painters of manners seems to be above their age not because they conceal its idiosyncracies by abstraction but because, though the manners of one age are very like those of another, only the greatest writers can transcribe them correctly.

Jane Austen had a keen insight into human character and her power of interpreting character was quite unrivalled. As a result of this, she has been able to portray on her limited canvas a large variety of convincing human characters. In her six great novels, she never once repeats a character. Her men and women, both good and bad, are all individuals who can be at once distinguished from the rest of their kind. For instance, we find that while Thackeray's good women are all the more or less alike, Jane Austen's good women, Elinor Dashwood, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot are all so different from one another. Her less perfect but more attractive heroines, Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse are equally individualised. She has

succeeded in making nice distinctions between characters, exemplifying the same human traits or foibles. From the Rev. Mr. Collins and the Rev. Mr. Elton, we find that there can be more than one specimen of a disagreeable and snobbish clergyman. Similarly we have in Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Jennings two specimens of cheery vulgarity while Isabella Thorpe and Lucy Steele represent two different types of selfish and calculating flirts. Each one of these women as well as the men who belong to their respective circles are so convincingly portrayed by Jane Austen that we can recognize their counter-parts among the people we meet in our everyday lives. They impress us by their air of modernity because Miss Austen has invested each of these characters with something of the eternal human besides the external trappings of men and women belonging to George the Third's reign in England. It is the presence of this 'eternal human' elements in her characters that make them so attractively modern. It is true that her stories are stories of men and women who had lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the rural districts of southern England. But it is not as social history that novels like *Mansfield Park* or *Emma* or *Pride and Prejudice* appeal to us. While the novels of Fanny Burney and Mariam Edgeworth are 'dated' Miss Austen's are not. The Rev. Elton who is the vicar of Highbury does not live in our memory as an English country-clergyman of the early nineteenth century. He is remembered because of his essential human nature which is of all time and never loses its appeal for us. Mrs. Elton and Mrs. Norris are both pushing and selfish vulgarians whose counter-parts can be met with in any modern society. Similarly, simple-hearted garrulous old spinsters like Miss Bates can also be met with among our own acquaintance at the present day. Undisciplined romantics like Marianne Dashwood and well-meaning imaginists like Emma Woodhouse also belong to our own age and society. When Mr. Woodhouse describes his grandchildren as remakably clever because they would come and stand by his chair and say, "Grand father, can you give me a bit of string ?" We have an echo of the fatuously fond words used by all grandparents in speaking of their

grandchildren. It is quite true to say that Miss Austen's "realistic English drawing rooms, like the unfurnished antechambers of French classical drama are theatres in which elemental human folly and inconsistency play out their eternal comedy."

Jane Austen has been labelled a social satirist on account of her observation and recording of folly and pretence and meanness which are as much characteristic of humanity at the present day as they were characteristic of men and women in her own day. Her books, with all their variety of excellences, are stories of love relating to young people, especially, the delightful heroines, whose happiness they involve. Elizabeth Bennet and her sisters of the other novels have nothing extra-ordinary or remarkable about them. Yet we like them enough and seem to know them well enough because "their simple virtues, the charm of their youth and good looks and happy natures are matters of everyday experience. The power which makes them immortal is Jane Austen's "talent for describing the involvements and feelings of ordinary life, "which seemed to Walter Scott the most wonderful he had ever met. This, coupled with the essential human nature reflected in her characterisation invests her novels with a striking air of modernity. It makes her to rank with the greater imaginative writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare who belong to all time.

Q. How far does *Emma* illustrate the gradations of rank in society at the beginning of the nineteenth century ?

Answer. The six great novels of Jane Austen can be considered on three levels of meaning. "They can be taken as broad allegories in which Sense, Sensibility, Pride, Prejudice and a number of other virtues and defects are set forth in narrative form and commented on in this way. They can also be considered on the ironic level where we can regard the various incidents, situations and characters as implying something beyond what they embody, as symbolic rather than allegorical. Thirdly, they can be considered as social

history dealing with country-life among the upper middle classes in southern England at the end of the eighteenth century. As social history, reflecting the manners and ways of life-characteristic of the period, the novels of Miss Austen depict things like the gradations of rank in society popularly recognized at the time. *Emma* is of particular importance in this respect, because the hero and heroine are both members of the wealthy landed class, very proud of their belonging to the gentry and very particular about maintaining all the gradations of rank in their society. According to our modern standards and practices, it would appear that all the fuss that was made about gradations of rank in the society of Jane Austen's day, was meaningless and vain. But to people like Emma Woodhouse and George Knightley and their class in general, those gradations were right and proper. In the behaviour of each of the characters portrayed in *Emma*, is a deep respect for the established social order and each tries to conform to the fashions and formalities set down by that order.

In the very beginning of the novel, Emma Woodhouse is introduced to us as a rich, young and beautiful lady, who, being the mistress of Hartfield, is held in great respect and admiration by the entire village. When she decides to improve the lot of Harriet Smith who is the natural daughter of somebody, by making a constant companion of her, she immediately quashes the relations between Harriet and the Martins of Abbey Mill Farm, who belong to a much lower rung of the social ladder than the one to which Miss Woodhouse's proud protegee should belong. She declares : "The yoemanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do. A degree or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me ; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other. But a farmer can need none of my help, and is therefore in one sense as much above my notice as in every other he is below it." This shows how much importance Emma, like the majority of people belonging to her class, attached to distinctions of social gradations. Robert Martin, being a gentleman farmer, was no object of charity

whom Emma could patronise, nor was he high enough in the social ladder to make Emma admit him to the circle of her acquaintance.

In Emma's attitude to Mr. Elton, we have another of the gradations of rank in society implied. The young vicar of Highbury was not "a man of property" like Mr. Knightley and though by virtue of his being a clergyman, he was admitted at Hartfield on a pretence of equality, he was not to be considered the equal of the Woodhouses in social rank. He was only a parson, allowed graciously to dine at the wealthy land-owner's table and it was presumption on his part to aspire to be the husband of his kind host's daughter. In the scene in which, flushed with wine and false hopes, he makes his proposal, Emma really feels insulted and makes him understand as much.

The existing gradations in social rank, did not, however, prevent Mr. Elton from making a very suitable match with the pushing vulgarian, the newly rich Augusta Hawkins who was forever speaking of her upstart brother-in-law and his prosperity. It is evident that she does not belong to the gentry though she is tolerated and admitted on a footing of equality at Hartfield and Donwell Abbey and Randalls on account of her being the vicar's wife. The attitude of Emma and Mr. Knightley to Mrs. Elton reflects the contempt in which the truly genteel folk held the newly rich, who, having made money in trade or industry were pushing their way up to the genteel circles.

Mrs. and Miss Bates, living in honourable poverty, with their accomplished, but poor niece, represent the social rank between the gentry and the yeomanry. Though Mrs. Bates is poor, she is the widow of a former vicar of Highbury and is therefore entitled to a certain rank in society in spite of her poverty. Her grand-daughter, Jane Fairfax, though the highly accomplished adopted child of Colonel Campbell, is not respectable enough to be admitted into the genteel class represented by the Churchills. It was almost certain that the aristocratic Mrs. Churchill would have disinherited Frank Churchill if she had come

to know of his secret engagement to Jane. That is the reason why the engagement is kept secret till after the death of Mrs. Churchill.

The country-gentry of Jane Austen's day, occasionally admitted into their class such people as the Coles and Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. They were not born genteel but were considered to have acquired gentility and they were eager to move on terms of easy familiarity with the established gentry. There was, of course, at first, a little diffidence and hesitation on the part of people like the Coles in making their way into genteel circles or in inviting genteel people to mingle freely with them. It is after much deliberation and careful planning for the comfort of Mr. Woodhouse that they decide to invite Emma and her father to the party at their house as they know that Emma belongs to a higher social rank and might not care to accept their invitation. Emma herself had, at first, no thought of accepting the invitation because the Coles were not her social equals. It would not be quite proper for Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield to be at the Coles's, considering that "they were of low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel." So Emma almost declined the invitation. But then her youthful fondness for dancing and for the company of other young people prevailed over her aristocratic scuples and the Westons could easily persuade her to go to the party, after all. The fact that Jane Austen makes Emma accept the Coles's invitation is an indication that people like the Coles who were only moderately genteel were admitted occasionally into the ranks of the gentry in her days.

But in spite of the distinctions in rank between social classes there was nothing to prevent a squire like George Knightley or a lady like Emma from being extremely courteous to poor but respectable people like Miss Bates, Miss Fairfax and Mrs. Bates. So the Bateses and Miss Fairfax are welcomed at Hartfield, Randalls and Donwell Abbey and Miss Bates and her niece are included in the party to Box Hill.

Emma who moves on terms of equality with Harriet so long as she believes her to be the daughter of a gentleman begins to show her the cold shoulder on learning that she is only the daughter of a tradesman though he is rich enough to maintain her in comfort and to provide liberally for her at her marriage. After learning the truth about Harriet's parentage, Emma is prepared to admit that the gentleman farmer Robert Martin is a good enough match for her. Harriet's marriage with Robert Martin being once fixed, the intimacy between her and Emma began to dwindle gradually as she was drawn away more and more into the company of the Martins. Their former friendship was slowly sinking into a calmer sort of goodwill which was all that the lady of Donwell Abbey could extend to the wife of the farmer at Abbey Mill Farm. Thus the novel, in general, and particularly the conduct of the heroine Emma, give us an idea of the gradations of rank which existed in Jane Austen's society.

Q. Does Jane Austen gain or lose by the limitations she imposes on herself ?

Answer. Jane Austen, writing her novels dealing with the country-gentry in the rural districts of Southern England has left out of her fiction the Napoleonic wars as well as all the political and social upheavals of her time. She has sometimes been very foolishly condemned for this narrow limitation she has imposed on herself. While many writers of inferior fiction felt it their duty to give expression to the contemporary situation in their novels. Jane Austen wisely left such things to statesmen and historians who could better deal with them. Thus she has remained the supreme example of an artist who knows her range and sticks to it. There is no doubt of the fact that she had temptations towards a larger world. There is the well-known story of the prince Regent's librarian who tried hard to tempt Jane Austen into writing "an historical romance illustrative of the August house of Coburg." Her admirable and modest reply to the Rev. Mr. Clarke's suggestion was that such a book might well be more popular than the

pictures of domestic life in country-villages such as she dealt in, but that she could no more write a romance than an epic poem. "No," she wrote to Rev. Clarke, "I must keep to my own style, and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other." So she went on, in her own way and the result is that she rose to the highest rank among the writers of English fiction. It is interesting to note what Robert Liddell has to say on this point in his "Treatise on the Novel." He says: "Of the wisdom of knowing how to work within a limited range, Jane Austen's works are the triumphant proof—she gives us no blurred, formless panorama, but a neat, perfectly composed, sharply focused picture. And she shows that it is not width of vision, but depth that is important. In the small section of humanity that she has chosen to depict, she has given us the greatest of English comic characters. And in the marriages of her ladylike young women with her eligible young men, she has combined a great variety of incident with a corresponding variety and delicacy of feeling. No attentive reader of *Mansfield Park* or *Persuasion* can deny her power to depict physical passion."

In the choice of her material, Jane Austen never went outside her own experience. Hence nearly all her scenes are in the rural districts of southern Eagland. Her characters belong mainly to the aristocracy and upper middle class of the English village and its neighbourhood. Incidentally, one may come across accounts of the season and the fashionable crowd at Bath or the humble sailor life at Portsmouth and Lyme. Her young gentlemen are eligible bachelors with good incomes who are either seeking or ought to be seeking wives. Her young women, not always well provided for, are to be married off by match-making mothers and aunts and are eager to be provided with the security of a comfortable home. Other characters we come across in her novels, include country-clergymen, married or not married, and gentlemanly villains like Wickham who induce beautiful girls to elope with them and are forgiven and liberally provided for by the girls' families. The men including the

clergy, do not seem to have any serious work, except to attend balls, dine out, take part in private theatricals or picnics, talk about their horses, go about from estate to estate or make short trips to London. The only man who impresses us as having a landlord's usual occupations is Mr. Knightley and even he himself has plenty of time to be passed agreeably at Hartfield or Randalls. "The young women read romances, collect and transcribe riddles, thumb the harp or pianoforte, play whist five evenings in the week, drink tea and eat buttered bread and baked apples ; make garments for the poor, cut out stomachers for aunts, knit garters for grandmothers, take a little horseback riding for exercise, pick straw-berries, visit the estates of their future husbands, and work transparencies for their windows, where Tintern Abbey holds its station between a cave in Italy and a moonlight lake in Cumberland." Thus we see that what we get in Jane Austen's novels, is an account of the most ordinary happenings in the domestic life of the country-gentry in the rural England. "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery," she wrote and held to this rule invariably. The only account of misery we come across in her novels is that of the slovenly Price family at Portsmouth in *Mansfield Park*.

The limits which Jane Austen set herself were of her own choice and were even narrower than the limits of her experience. Though she was not unacquainted with London and other towns she never chooses an urban scene for her novels. It suited her to give us intimate pictures of domestic life in country-villages. "Three or four families in a country-village," she considered the very thing to work on. She chose a village-like Highbury or a country-house like Mansfield Park because that was what she knew and loved best and could therefore, depict truthfully and interestingly. In *Emma*, she gives a fine account of the village of Highbury which has been called "an admirable picture of the tedious of life in a country-town." It is significant that her heroine Emma did not find it tedious, nor did her creator. Even within her own narrow limits Jane Austen excluded from her novels everything of which

she did not feel herself to be mistress. She has never depicted a male conversation without female audience because she distrusted her powers in reporting what she could never heard. This kind of restraint in the use of her material is part of her genius, though it has not always been understood.

Keeping within her own range, Jane Austen has given us splendid specimens of the comedy of manners. She herself emphasized the comic aspect of her work when declaring that she could not write a serious romance to save her life. We recall Elizabeth confessing that she cannot help laughing at human follies and weaknesses whenever she can and the same confession could be made by her creator who has given us her incomparable gallery of fools. But the observation and recording of folly and meanness and pretence is not the only admirable quality for which Jane Austen is remembered. Working well within her limits, she has given us very entertaining love-stories in which the interest of the novelist is centred in her young people and particularly, in her heroines. These young people have become so dear to us that their names are now household words. "Their simple virtues, the charm and happy natures, are matters of everyday experience, The power which makes them loved is rare indeed." "The secret of enduring fiction is sympathy and passion—an emotional not an intellectual endowment." Because Jane Austen possessed these, she has been able to make ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment. She would not have been able to do this, if she had not wisely kept within her own limited range. Hence it is evident that she has gained enormously by the limitations she has imposed on herself.

Q. "It is said that *Emma* is lacking in both hero and heroine." How far is this true ?

Answer. *Emma* being the product of Jane Austen's mature genius, may be considered as being characteristic of her art at its most perfect. Like her other novels it deals

with a picture of domestic life in a quiet country-village like Highbury and its charm lies mainly in the novelist's power of making commonplace incidents and personages interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment. Being a critic of contemporary manners and of romanticism in literature, she makes it her business to laugh at human follies and weaknesses and to show that even the best of her characters are not free from the usual human failings and shortcomings. The heroine of *Emma* is full of faults and the hero, Mr. Knightley has been called insufferable and considered as a prig. Hence it may be conceded that the novel is lacking in the conventional hero and heroine of romantic fiction who endear themselves to readers on account of their virtues and the glamour of their personalities.

About Emma Woodhouse, Jane Austen wrote in one of her letters : "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." We have to agree with the critic, Howells that it required great courage on the part of the novelist to portray as her heroine, who is meant to win and keep the reader's fancy, a girl with Emma's attributes. Though she is young, rich, intelligent, beautiful, charming, perceptive and gay as a heroine should be, she is also frankly admitted to be vain of her own perceptions, snobbish, domineering, rash and selfish. It is true that an officious and self-confident girl, however pretty she may be, does not usually attract one's fancy and yet, by the power of Jane Austen's art, Emma is made to take our fancy, as a true heroine of fiction should.

The first volume of the novel introduces us to the Emma of supreme self-confidence and serene delusion. The real evils of Emma's situation were the power of having too much her own way and an inclination to think a little too well of herself. Both these are shown to be the result of universal spoiling at home and admiration abroad. Emma's faith in her own judgment and insight makes her to ignore the timely warnings of the sensible Mr. Knightley while embarking on her match-making adventure. Jane Austen lets us see the progress of events through Emma's eyes and

as such, we cannot blame her too much for becoming the victim of her own delusions. The denouement of the first movement of the story leaves her stunned and mortified. She is quite concerned at the unhappiness she has caused to Harriet and is resolved not to do such things any more.

Yet, at the earliest opportunity, we find Emma indulging in new fancies and her match-making mind busy with new schemes and ideas. She easily imagines herself in love with the dashing young son of Mr. Weston and as easily fancies herself out of it after a time. Then accident having made, Frank Churchill, the saviour of Harriet Smith, from the attack of gypsies, she decides to bring about a match between the two. She is, however, more careful this time, so as not to cause another disappointment to her protegee. Mentioning no names, she advises Harriet to elevate her thoughts to somebody quite superior to her. She encourages Harriet by pointing out that marriages between persons of greater social disparity have been known to take place and she had, therefore, every right to hope. The extent of the mischief she has done becomes clear to her only at long last when Frank Churchill's secret engagement is revealed. While Emma tries to console Harriet, the truth comes out that Frank Churchill has never been in her thoughts, which have been centred on no less a person than Emma's oldest and truest friend, Mr. Knightley. At this discovery, the truth flashes through Emma, with the speed of an arrow that no one should marry Mr. Knightley, but herself. In a moment she becomes aware of the fact that she has all along been in love with Mr. Knightley and being first with him in everything has mattered most to her in life. Jane Austen very carefully and very skilfully reveals to us the workings of Emma's thoughts and feelings during this period of her life that our hearts go out to her in sympathy. We are as anxious as Emma herself to know the state of Mr. Knightley's feelings and are sincerely relieved and even overjoyed at the declaration of love in the shrubbery at Hartfield which leaves our heroine speechless with happiness. Thus Jane Austen, after having chosen a young woman who is anything but perfect in her character and attributes,

succeeds by means of her imaginative sympathy, in portraying her in such a way that the reader is as much interested in her happiness as if she were the most perfect of heroines. Thus the novel is not lacking a heroine, though Emma Woodhouse is not the kind of sentimental or romantic heroine we meet with in the novels of Jane Austen's predecessors or contemporaries.

To turn to the hero, Knightley, he is seen to be equally anti-romantic. While some critics have found in him the most perfect example of an English gentleman, others have called him a prig and have found him insufferable. In the opinion of A. H. Wright, "his manly vigour and forthrightness are the outward and visible signs of a sterling integrity and an (almost) unfailing sympathy." He is a sensible man who appraises coolly, judges calmly and acts decisively. It is true that unconscious jealousy makes him unwilling to attribute much merit to Frank Churchill. His lack of enthusiasm for the ball at the Crown is also the result of his wish that Emma should not be given too much opportunity to fall in love with Frank Churchill.

Though George Knightley may not be the dashing, glamorous type of hero one usually meets with in romantic fiction, he is gifted with plenty of commonsense, "the man-in-the street variety," which makes him a good critic of Emma's folly at every stage of the story. In the very first chapter, he advises Emma to leave Mr. Elton to choose his own wife. But she, misled by a desire to order other people's lives, ignores his sensible advice. It is the capacity of a friend, philosopher and guide that he appears to Emma till the moment of sudden self-recognition in which she becomes aware of her love for him. Speaking the unvarished truth as he knew it, he was not able to flatter Emma as others did and he was not a man who could make fine speeches or pay beautiful compliments. In his character and attitude, there is hardly anything romantic and his insistence on right and proper behaviour on the part of Emma makes him out to be something of a prig. He is, certainly, not the type of man who would appeal to the romantic

imagination of a young girl, inexperienced in the ways of the world.

Improper Propriety is one of the attributes of Mr. Knightley which, though not so attractive in the eyes of people like Frank Churchill (who do many important things and say many more), is a very fine quality in a gentleman. He notices early the impropriety of Frank Churchill's failure to visit his parents after repeated promises to do so. He also notices the impropriety of Emma's conduct on Box Hill when she makes cruel fun of the simple-minded, garrulous old spinster, Miss Bates. Though his clear-sightedness does not blind him to Miss Bates's failings, he is ever kind and courteous to her and he reprimands Emma sternly for her rudeness to the old woman. "Sensible, proper, kind, open and vigorous—these are the words which come most readily to mind to describe George Knightley," says A. H. Wright. He represents a standard of values which are opposed by the cleverness, charm, subtlety, wit and receptivity of Emma Woodhouse whom he loves in spite of her faults. He has always loved her because he knows that in spite of the contradictions in her nature, which are amusing and deeply human, she is characterised by the same nobility of heart which he himself possesses. It has always been his rather unpleasant and prosaic duty to warn Emma not to make a fool of herself by following her vain delusions. When Emma has paid for her delusive self-confidence by truly painful humiliations, she sees Knightley for what he is worth. His truly admirable qualities of head and heart, though they do not make him a glamorous hero of romantic fiction, do make him a perfect English gentleman, worthy of the hand of his Emma. Thus we find that in Emma Woodhouse and Mr. George Knightley, we have a heroine and a hero who are truly loved and admired by us for their essential goodness and nobility of heart, though they may not be superficially as attractive as the heroines and heroes of conventional fiction.

Q. "All the best novelists are match-makers." How far is it true of Jane Austen ?

Answer. It may be truly said of most novels in the world that they deal with the ways of a man with a maid, very often culminating in his leading her to the altar. Though there may be notable exceptions to this in world fiction, there is no exception to this in the novels of Jane Austen. She, like the rest of her tribe, is a born match-maker who finds great pleasure in bringing Jack and Jill together in spite of all the obstacles in the paths of these true lovers. All her six novels, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* are unpretentious love-stories where she watches over the fortunes of her beloved hero and heroine till the barks of their young lives have reached the haven of matrimony.

Mr. Garrod, speaking in disparagement of Jane Austen's novels says that she had but one plot. In five of the six novels, a village or something answering to it is depicted. The scene of the story may be the Dashwood's cottage in Devonshire, or Meryton, or Mansfield Park or Highbury or Kellynch, here lives a very attractive, marriageable young woman by name Marianne, Elizabeth, Fanny, Emma or Anne. A young and eligible bachelor who is seeking a wife or ought to be seeking one, comes to the village. He may happen to be a neighbouring Willoughby or a proud Darcy, or a visiting Crawford or a handsome Churchill or a naval captain on leave from the King's service. The only exception to this is *Northanger Abbey* where the hero and heroine "are drawn from outside into the vortex of Bath." Each of the heroines is furnished with a foil who sets off her charms and shows her in the most attractive light. Thus there are Marianne and Elinor, Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Bennet, Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe, Fanny Price and Mary Crawford, Emma Woodhouse and Jane Fairfax, and Anne Elliot and Miss Elliot. But the monotony of parallelism has never been felt in her novels because, plot, as plot, does not much matter. It is only

there to provide a reasonably probable and symmetrical framework in which character and sentiment can have free play. In the words of Robert Liddell, "in the marriages of her lady like young woman with her eligible young man she has combined a great variety of incident with a corresponding variety and delicacy of feeling." This is true of all the novels. We cannot help being impressed by the variety of incidents through, which the hero and heroine are finally led into each other's arms. Sense, Sensibility, Pride, Prejudice, Vanity, Self-conceit and even Self-abnegation are all pressed into service in preventing the hero and heroine from coming together immediately. A great many events have to be got through and much painful self-analysis has to be gone through before the hero and heroine can find happiness in each other's love. Very often their own blindness and folly are responsible for their failure to find happiness in love and at other times it is the working of an unkind fate or the schemes of selfish and mean people which stands in the way of the lover's happiness. In the course of all the matchmaking, Jane Austen indulges, she seems to imply, in the words of Lord David Cecil that "It was wrong to marry for money, but it was silly to marry without it." The mercenary view of marriage is proclaimed by many of her people, because, in her days, the only alternative to marriage, for a poor girl was being a governess, which was a kind of slavery. What Jane Austen really thought of the place of love in marriage is illustrated by the words and actions of her heroines who are as good as they are pretty. We have Elizabeth's spirited repudiation of Collins, Fanny's rejection of Crawford, Anne Elliot's rejection of her crafty cousin and Marianne's contempt for Colonel Brandon's advancing years and flannel waistcoats. In this connection, one may quote what Gilbert Phelps has to say about Jane Austen's heroines. He says in his *Survey of English Literature*, "In nearly all her novels there is a heroine of superior intelligence and moral fibre who is called upon to make individual judgments, and though these are certainly related to the society to which she belongs, they are not always acceptable to it. This is particularly so where love is concerned : the heroine's circle may give its blessing to

marriage for money or social standing, but the heroine always knows or as with Anne Elliot in *Persuation* comes to know that this is an issue in which she must be guided by her own feelings and not by the 'prudent counsels' of others. The ideal of love as the only basis for marriage is absolutely central to Jane Austen's morality and the independence and determination with which she expresses it through her heroines, are not really in line with the Augustan ideal of strict social conformity. In this sense, therefore, Jane Austen herself gave expression to the reaction against readymade codes and to that assertion of the sanctity of individual responsibility and judgment which was such an important aspect of the Romantic Revival."

Though we may recall Elizabeth Bennet's confession that she cannot help laughing at all instance of folly and pretence and meanness and the incomparable gallery of fools, her creator has depicted for us, it is not merely the observation and recording of human folly and weakness that accounts for the popularity of Jane Austen's novels. She has her hold on our affections, because, like all great novelists, she has given us excellent love-stories and it is the interest of the stories, and of the young people whose happiness they involve which makes its appeal to generations of readers. Jane Austen herself cared much for her young people and she succeeds in making us as interested as she herself was, in the love and marriage of each one of her heroines. Elizabeth and her sisters of the other novels are presented to us in such a way that their simple virtues, the charm of their youth and good looks, and happy natures, make us deeply interested in their marrying the sort of husbands they deserve. With her unrivalled "talent for describing the involvements and feelings of ordinary life," Jane Austen has told the love-stories of her beloved heroines so interestingly that she can be considered a great match-maker like the other great novelists of the world.

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